

# CIVIC

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## Entrepreneurship

**A Civil Society Perspective  
on Sustainable Development**

**Volume 1  
Global Synthesis**

**Volumes in the series:**

***Civic Entrepreneurship – A Civil Society  
Perspective on Sustainable Development***

Volume I: A Global Synthesis

Volume II: Africa

Volume III: Latin America

Volume IV: South Asia

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Volume VI: West Asia and North Africa

Volume VII: Central and Eastern Europe

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## Entrepreneurship

**A Civil Society Perspective  
on Sustainable Development**

**Volume 1  
Global Synthesis**

Tariq Banuri

Adil Najam



GANDHARA ACADEMY PRESS

*Stockholm Environment Institute – Boston Center*

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Stockholm Environment Institute – Boston Center

11 Arlington Street

Boston, MA 02116-3411

Phone: 1 617 266 8090

Email: [info@tellus.org](mailto:info@tellus.org)

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*This set of books is dedicated to the memories of four champions of civil society –*

Anil Agarwal, Maximo "Junie" Kalaw, Jacques Bugnicourt and Omar Asghar Khan –  
all of whom died in the last year.

Each one of them was Civic Entrepreneur extraordinaire. The memory of each will be cherished for the civil will their lives were an expression of. Each one of them proved that individuals can make a difference; that sustainable development can be achieved; that no matter how difficult things are, one must never give up on dreams of building a better world.

The memory of Anil, Junie, Jacques and Omar will remain with us, guiding us  
all toward the sustainable development future they dreamt of...  
a dream we all share.

**Anil Agarwal** was the founder and visionary leader of India's premier environmental organization, Center for Science and Environment. Anil led a number of successful environmental campaigns in India, including for the rights to clean air, water and improved performance of companies. Globally, Anil brought about a significant and now-standard concept of equity into the discourse on climate change. Nationally, he was instrumental in pulling together intellectual and human resources to raise critical awareness on environmental concerns.

**Jacques Bugnicourt** was the founder and leader of Environmental Development of the Third World, ENDA-TM, an international association based in Senegal. Jacques brought poverty eradication to the center of Senegal's environment and development debate, educating government as well as the public on sustainable development. His initiative drove ENDA's highly successful methodology of reflection and action, working at the grassroots as well as policy level to bring about an associational revolution in the country.

**Maximo "Junie" Kalaw** was the far-sighted executive director of the Earth Council and served as a member of the Earth Council's Advisory Board since the organizations' inception. He worked with numerous ecology and development organizations to implement a Filipino values system. Among the institutions Junie has helped to foster are the Philippine Institute for Alternative Futures, which translates personal growth into social transformation; the Haribon Foundation, a pioneering conservation group; and Green Forum-Philippines a coalition of civil society groups working for sustainable development.

**Omar Asghar Khan** was the founder and first executive director of SUNGI Development Foundation, one of the first rights-based community development organizations in Pakistan. Omar's sheer will turned SUNGI into one of the prime protector and promoter of the rights of disadvantaged groups across the country. His vision carried through in his brief experience as the Federal Minister for Environment and Rural Development, and his consistent focus on pro-poor development energized civil society in Pakistan.



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# Foreword

*The relationship between the United Nations and civil society has changed beyond all recognition... Information technology has empowered civil society to be the true guardians of democracy and good governance everywhere... In a sense, [civil society] has been the new superpower – the people determined to promote better standards of life in larger freedom.*

– **Kofi Annan**, United Nations Secretary-General  
Address to the Parliamentary Group,  
Parlatino, Sao Paulo, 14 July 1998 (SG/SM/6638)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is a pioneer in terms of forging strong and deep relationships between civil society and the international system. It was founded explicitly in response to demands articulated during the NGO Forum that took place alongside the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. It began its life with active collaboration from NGOs, this cooperation culminated in the landmark publication *The World Conservation Strategy* in 1980 (a collaboration between UNEP, IUCN and WWF). It supported the founding of an NGO network, the Environment Liaison Centre (ELCI) in Nairobi, to facilitate interaction with environmental NGOs from around the world. In all these initiatives, UNEP was ahead of its time. The UNEP Governing Council has repeatedly called for the further strengthening of these relationships; most recently in its Decisions 21/19 taken in Nairobi and GCSS VII/5 taken in Cartagena, which calls for an even more active role for civil society in UNEP's activities. UNEP's commitment to such a partnership is reflected in the most recent edition of our flagship publication, the *Global Environment Outlook 3 Report* (GEO-3).

In this context, I am particularly happy to introduce this set of books *Civic Entrepreneurship: A Civil Society Perspective on Sustainable Development*, which celebrates the real impact civil society has had on actualizing sustainable development. This set of books is more than just a chronicle of successful experiences from around the globe. *Civic Entrepreneurship: A Civil Society Perspective on Sustainable Development* is based on the premise that in today's world, it is not only the past that determines what is and what shall be, but rather that the trends of the present can rewrite the history of what may be. In exploring this premise, the series attempts to understand what has worked for sustainable development, and thus what needs to be built upon to shape a future we want to see; a future that captures the essence of sustainable development.

The structure of this series is designed in exactly this light. Rather than begin with a fixed vision of sustainable development, and hence be tied inextricably to the trends of the past, the reports are based on an understanding of national and regional contexts, and how particular initiatives have begun to re-define these contexts through their actions. The vision that emerges is then expanded from the local to the national to the regional, and then to the global.

The heart of the series is the set of local efforts, which are captured in chapters on national

experiences; these are integrated into regional perspectives and distilled in the global synthesis. The thread that is woven through the series and holds it together is the presence of civil will as the driver of sustainable development, whether through civil society or through government policy.

The findings of this series relates directly to UNEP's most recent *Global Environmental Outlook 3* (GEO-3). The GEO-3 report posits four scenarios or alternative visions of the future – Markets First, Policy First, Security First, Sustainability First – incorporating the diverse elements of markets, state and civil society. In exploring the future, it emerged that what is most important today is not to project the past, but to explore the various options before us today, and that the most important aspect of the present is the 'will' driving us forward. This series validates the findings of GEO-3 by demonstrating that civil will has been a much stronger driver of sustainable development than market entrepreneurship or political will.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) is a good moment in time to proffer civil will as the vision to define the future. A decade after the watershed in Rio, and less than a year after the world turned a collective corner on 9/11, civil will is presented here as a story of hope for the future. The decade after Johannesburg must recognize the reality of developing countries, a reality in which the 'present' defined by market freedom and lack of political commitment do not inspire confidence in a sustainable future. The intention of this series is to inspire the present beyond the Summit to determine the future in a way that has not been determined by the past.

I am grateful to Dr. Tariq Banuri of the Stockholm Environmental Institute-Boston for defining this exciting project, to him and his colleagues in the Ring – a global alliance of policy institutes with long-standing ties with UNEP – for carrying it out in a remarkably short period of time, to the Stockholm Environment Institute-Boston for ably managing the set of activities entailed, and to UNEP's Division of Policy Development and Law, especially its Director, Dr. Bakary Kante, for supporting and guiding this process. This set of volumes comes at a particularly important time for UNEP and I am confident that it will help us devise ways to further strengthen our relationships with civil society organizations in our joint pursuit of sustainable development in practice.

Klaus Töpfer

United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, United Nations  
Environment Programme

July 2002

# Preface

*“When someone said to Socrates, ‘Hector was courageous’, he asked ‘Define courage’; [he should have asked], ‘Tell me Hector’s story’.”*

– Hannah Arendt

In this seven-volume series, we take a leaf from Arendt’s book. We do not try to define sustainable development from abstract principles. Rather, we tell the story of sustainable development – in fact, we tell over seventy stories of sustainable development. We seek to organize and synthesize experiences from around the world on what sustainable development looks like in practice and what factors contribute to its success.

We begin with a premise, an observation and a question. The premise is that the expectations of a major global shift towards sustainable development after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED also called the Rio Earth Summit) have remained largely unfulfilled. The observation is that although many government policies were formulated in the last decade, many private entrepreneurs responded to emerging profit opportunities, and many scholars wrote learned treatises on the meanings of sustainable development, neither policies nor market forces nor academia were able to deliver on the promise of sustainable development. Yet, there are civil society actors all across of the world who have – in their own, often small, ways – already begun practicing sustainable development through their actions. While political will has been ambiguous, while the market incentives have been inadequate, while scholarship has been far off the mark, civic entrepreneurship – the actions of civil society leaders in pursuit of common goals – has been consistent, focused, and catalytic. Our question, then, is how can we enable this successful practice to guide the theory as well as experience of sustainable development, instead of allowing an inadequate theoretical framework to keep the practice hostage: what are the characteristics that exemplify sustainable development in practice, what are the elements that help operationalize it, and most importantly, what does this experience have to say to the policy maker, the student, the researcher, and the practitioner?

To seek answers, we turned to the community of civil society practitioners from around the world (see Annex 1). Over the last year, this research cast a wide consultative net that has involved over 350 individuals from over 70 countries, asking them to point us towards what they considered to be good examples of sustainable development in practice, why they thought so, and what they thought one could learn from these examples about the future of sustainable development (see Annex 3). This consultation progressed through various stages – starting with initial discussions with civil society leaders around the world, from whence came an outline for 22 national and sub-regional reports; to formal consultations with a broader array of national and international civil society organizations, electronically where possible, and through face-to-face meetings where necessary (e.g., in West Asia); to the drafting of national and sub-regional reports on the experience of sustainable development (see Annex 4). The goal, in each case, was to cast as wide a net as possible in the gathering of information and insights. The draft reports were submitted to both internal and external reviews by renowned academics and experts.

Finally, all reports were discussed in a global e-conference, organized jointly with the LEAD-International Fellows Program. Each of these processes generated a set of comments that were conveyed back to the authors and fed into the final drafts.

The results of this prolonged research process are presented in this seven-volume series (see Annex 2). The first volume presents a global synthesis of the findings of the project while the remaining six volumes focus on the experiences with sustainable development in Africa, Latin America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia and North Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe. Each regional volume responds to our central question in terms of the particular experiences in the countries of that region. Each provides examples of sustainable development at work; each highlights key lessons and challenges for sustainable development practice in its particular context; and each suggests how sustainable development can best be advanced in that particular country or sub-region. The purpose of the global report is not to summarize the results and recommendations of these rich and varied accounts; rather, it is to synthesize this learning and to derive from it key lessons pertaining to our central question.

Besides these seven volumes, the research and consultations led to an additional benefit, namely the design of a user-friendly civil society website for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Civil Society Liaison Office; and the development of an extensive database of individuals, organizations, and networks from the civil society, which have contributed to UNEP's work in one way or another. If this database is kept up to date, it can go a long way toward strengthening the bonds between UNEP and civil society organizations.

This set of publications and associated electronic products is, therefore, the result of an intense global dialogue between practitioners of sustainable development on what works and why. It seeks to celebrate sustainable development in practice. More than that, it seeks to advance this practice in the decade that will follow the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), by advising practitioners on how to translate their vision into reality; policy makers on how to create an enabling environment within which civic entrepreneurship – the primary engine of sustainable development – can flourish; researchers and students with a catalogue of information that will provide the grist for their mills of abstraction; citizens at large with a framework that recognizes their resolve – or civil will – as the foundation on which the good society is constructed.

Civil society practitioners should find these volumes useful because they contain a motherlode of practical information on how successful sustainable development initiatives around the world were designed and implemented, but more generally on what has worked elsewhere, how it has worked, and indeed, what specifically has worked: the common elements that are present in most success stories. The benefit for policymakers include a deep analysis of policy initiatives that have in the past enabled civic entrepreneurship to flourish. Similarly, business leaders will find examples of how civic entrepreneurship can both create new markets and new economic opportunities. Although these volumes have been written explicitly from the perspective of – and in the idiom of – the practitioner, academics should find these volume useful as data points on which to build future theorizing on sustainable development. Their students should find pedagogical value in the richness and variety of the experiences and perspectives from around the globe that are organized and synthesized in these seven volumes.

Funding for the consultation and research work on this project was provided by the Governments of Norway and Belgium, through the Division for Policy and Law of UNEP. We are grateful to both the donor governments for their generous financial support, and to UNEP for sustained guidance, support, and encouragement.

Of the many individuals at UNEP who have contributed to the intellectual and institutional shepherding of this work, we are especially grateful to Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, for his active interest in the project from the detailed comments he provided at the conceptualization stage to the detailed interest he continued to exhibit right until its conclusion. Dr. Bakary Kante, Director of the Division of Policy Development and Law has provided sustained intellectual and institutional support; among other things, he helped ensure that the research remains oriented toward issues that concern policy makers. Subramonia Ananthakrishnan, Chief of the NGO/Civil Society Unit, has almost been a part of the project team; without his enthusiasm and support, the research simply could not have been completed. Other members of the UNEP community who deserve special thanks are Adnan Amin, Director of the UNEP New York Office, Halifa Drammeh, Deputy Director of UNEP's Division of Policy Development and Law, Ashbindu Singh, UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment, and UNEP Regional Directors. Finally, the project owes much to the guiding vision of Dr. Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, who has made it a priority to incorporate civil society perspectives into the work of UNEP.

This project represents a collaboration of the Regional and International Networking Group (the RING). We would like to express our deep appreciation to all members, especially the coordinator, Vivian Davies, for the unflagging commitment, support, and ownership of this work. Many members of the RING have contributed to this project directly, and are acknowledged as authors or editors; besides these, we would like to express our thanks in particular to Ashok Khosla, George Varughese, Shahrukh Rafi Khan, Ana Hardoy, Ricardo Schusterman, Saleemul Huq, and Rubens Born.

We have been very fortunate to have been helped by a remarkably diligent team of research assistants in sewing the final product together; our thanks to Melissa Birch, Sherri Brokopp, Craig Enstad, and Jenny Synnott.

Through this collaboration, the project undertook a globally coordinated research and writing effort, much of which has been peer reviewed by a group of wise and dedicated individuals. For their careful consideration and comments, we extend our thanks to the Editorial Advisory Board: Hussein Abaza, Franck Amalric, Tom Bigg, Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend, Aaron Crosby, Sibille de Cartier, Ricardo Godoy, Nadia Hijab, Kazi Jalal, Bakary Kante, Bo Kjellen, Ambuj Sagar, Ashbindu Singh, Ravi Sharma, Shiv Someshwar, Paul Raskin, and Camilla Toulmin.

The electronic or direct consultations that provided both a source of ideas and a touch of reality to this research were organized by a number of partner organizations around the world. They include ELCI, NESDA, IIED-AL, CENESTA, ANGOC, SDPI, SEI-B, and the LEAD Fellows Program. We would like to thank all of these organizations and their staff for very effective management of the consultations. Among these individuals, we would like especially to recognize the outstanding contribution of Barbara Gemmill, Pamela Rhys-Hurn, Sujatha Byravan, Saodat Pulatova, and Charlie Heaps.

As the global synthesis document illustrates, this entire effort has used the GEO-3 scenarios as a basis for discussion and for conceptualizing sustainable futures in a locally relevant way. We are thankful to SEI-B, and especially to Paul Raskin and Eric Kemp-Benedict for their intellectual and practical contribution to analysis.

The Stockholm Environment Institute – Boston Center provided critical administrative and logistical support for the project from start to finish. We are grateful to the Institute for professionalism of a high order in discharging this responsibility. The research staff of the Institute assisted in the intellectual evolution of the project in more ways that can be counted. We would like to single out in particular the advice provided by Paul Raskin, Steve Bernow, Sivan Kartha, and Chella Rajan. However, the one person without whose contribution this project would simply not have been possible is Erika Spanger-Siegfried. We would like to extend a very special thank you to Erika for her advice, energy, commitment, perseverance, and charm.

An important product of the research project is the design of a user-friendly civil society website for UNEP, and a database of civil society organizations that have been involved in UNEP's work in a variety of ways. This entire work, as well as the cover design and graphics for the project were done at BeezTech Inc., a software house based in Islamabad, Pakistan. We would like to express our thanks to the design team consisting of Khalid Ali, Mohammad Zafar, Shoaib Zahidi, and Abdul Hafeez for their professional expertise and diligence of a high order.

We are indebted to our editorial and publishing team at River Street Design for their skill and ability to work wonders under deadline.

Most importantly we would like to thank all of our authors and contributing institutions and all those who participated in the various consultations around the world. Their input has made us much wiser about how sustainable development happens and much more optimistic about its prospects for the future.

Tariq Banuri

Adil Najam

Nancy Odeh

*(Series editors)*

Boston, Massachusetts

July 2002

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# Chapter 1: Envisioning Sustainable Development

*We shall not cease from exploration,  
And the end of all our exploring,  
Will be to arrive where we started,  
And know the place for the first time.*  
—T.S. Eliot

This series of books – six regional volumes plus this global synthesis – is like a tour of over a hundred places of interest, with brief glimpses of nearly a thousand more in twenty countries and regions, in search of sustainable development. The purpose is not to discover foreign countries but to discover new eyes and see one's own country as a foreign place; not to discover the unfamiliar but to recover the familiar and make it our ally; not to define sustainable development but to tell its story. We seek to provide not an explanation of sustainable development but the narrative of sustainable development.

As James Carse (1986) reminds us, the purpose of a story is not to convert the listener. A story cannot be obeyed. The purpose, rather, is to invite rethinking on what we thought we knew: how things have changed, how they are changing and how they may change – not how they *must* change nor even how they can be changed. The purpose is to write a history of the future – not an orchestrated and planned future that delivers what we wish nor a predetermined and inevitable future that ends as it must but a future that is still alive with possibility.

Much of the thinking on sustainable development is of a prefigured future reachable through collective human agency and concerted policy attention. It is as if sustainable development were a house, of which we had the blueprint already – the familiar triangle of economy, society and environment – and needed only the technical explanations of how to lay it out on the ground. This is the Policy Reform world of the *Global Environmental Outlook 3* (UNEP 2002), in which political leadership, awakening to the challenge of sustainable development, make concerted decisions to put in place the requisite policies, programs, institutional structures, funding mechanisms and leadership. Yet, there also appears to be a deep-seated pessimism and skepticism regarding this possibility, a sense that the political will

needed to propel the world onto this trajectory is absent at both the global and national levels. In the words of the NGO declaration at the UNEP Global Ministerial Forum at Malmö, Sweden, on 29 May, 2000, “The impressive array of agreements crafted with such effort and innovation has brought us no closer to repulsing the forces that threaten life upon Earth. On the contrary, the sheer volume and diversity of agreements has led to a paralysis of thought and action.”

Another line of thought, popular with financial institutions and neoliberal theorists, is of a predetermined future, a hydrological future, a future dictated by the inexorable process of the market, as if history were a mighty river flowing irresistibly along the gradient established by the economic motive, in which, if some areas were left dry and others inundated, the only recourse is to remove obstacles or build dams. This is the Market Reform world (UNEP 2002), in which the invisible hand of the market directs agency towards the public interest, howsoever defined. Yet, this vision too is blighted by a sense of despair both regarding the benign-ness of the market and the neutrality of its main beneficiaries. According to Jeremy Seabrook, writing in *The Guardian* (5 August 2002), sustainable development now means what the market, not the earth, can bear; what originally meant adjusting the industrial technosphere so that it should not destroy the planet has now come to indicate the regenerative power of the economy, no matter how it may degrade the environment.

In this series of books, our approach has turned out to be somewhat different. This is a collective endeavor of close to 100 individuals, all of them practitioners of sustainable development – those who have tried to put the idea into practice. The core of the group is the RING, a global alliance of policy research organizations which seeks to enhance and promote sustainable development and which was formed in 1991 to stimulate preparations for the 1992 Rio Summit. In this endeavor, the RING has collaborated with a large number of similar agencies and institutions, both global and local, and with the support of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). The original purpose of the collaboration was to envision sustainable development from a civil society perspective, by inviting the practitioners of sustainable development to reflect on their own experiences and on those from which they have sought inspiration, including the support received from the policy environment, market trends, scholarly literature and thus also indirectly from the policy maker, the business leader and the analyst.

Initially diverse and even discordant, as these different tunes began to resonate together in a growing harmony, the melody they have produced has turned out to be very different from what had been originally anticipated. It is more nuanced, more syncretic and integrated, less divisive, and imbued with a deeper sense of optimism. It has effectively blurred many familiar boundaries, such as those between the state, the market and civil society, between environment, development and poverty, between local, national and global programs, between social mobilization, service delivery and policy advocacy, between individual action and collective organization,

and between imitation, replication and innovation. It has forced a rethinking of each one's own experience.

The rest of this volume, and in fact this entire series, is a distillation of lessons from these narratives. However, two lessons need to be stated at the outset. First, we found that the main protagonist in our stories is not a particular type of organization but a particular type of motivation. Analogous to the economic motive, which drives the market process, and the political motive, which informs all aspirants to political power, we have sought to describe 'civil will,' the motivation to build social capital (see Banuri *et al.*, 1994). In fact, although the bulk of our attention is on the examples of civil will in civil-society organizations; we have also found significant examples among what would traditionally be classified as business or governmental institutions. We focus, naturally, on the great champions of sustainable development in civil society, the Akhter Hameed Khan, the Horacio Ravelo, the Akin Adejumo, the Ashok Khosla, or the Atiq Rahman; but, we also include in the category the pioneering contributions of Richard Holme, Syed Babar Ali, Stephan Schmidheiny and others from the business world, as well as those of Kofi Annan, Maurice Strong, Klaus Töpfer or Tasneem Siddiqui from governmental or inter-governmental domains.



**One must always begin by listening to people's stories**

Source: NRSP-P

Second, and to put it as simplistically as possible, we have found that sustainable development is not a blueprint. It always involves newness, a new way of pulling things together, new ways of mobilizing resources, building legitimacy, engendering

collective action, stimulating economic activity or adapting technology. In short, it involves *entrepreneurship*, in the manner that the great economist Joseph Schumpeter (1934) defined it. The Schumpeterian entrepreneur is not necessarily an inventor or manager or financier – he may just as easily be someone who adopts somebody else’s idea, borrows money from a bank and hires a manager to put the idea to practical use in a business or factory. Without entrepreneurship, ideas or inventions cannot impact development, sustainable or otherwise. The entrepreneur has the *imagination* to see the potential for profit from the innovation (i.e. the practical application of the technique), the *initiative* actually to carry out the task of introducing the innovation, and a *willingness* to take the calculated risk that the effort might fail and lead to a loss rather than a profit.

Schumpeter’s insight pertained mainly to entrepreneurship for business purposes. What we have found, however, is a form of entrepreneurship driven explicitly by the public interest, which seeks to create not necessarily a new way of making a profit but a new way of building social capital, a new way of showing how to harness existing ideas, methods, inventions, technologies, resources or management systems in the service of collective goals. It is, in short, *civic* entrepreneurship – hence the title of this series. As mentioned, civic entrepreneurship is not confined to the actions of civil society organizations; it includes the actions of visionary business leaders and government officials, whose work is driven by the civic motive.

This perspective on sustainable development can best be analogized to the growth process of a tree, starting from a single seed, rooted in the soil, dependent on its compatibility with the environment and, at least in its early years, requiring persistent attention and care. Every seed has the potential of becoming a tree, but not every seed will become a tree. Unlike the house or the river, its evolution is not predetermined by the dictates of the blueprint or the gradient.

More importantly, the tree grows not only in itself but also through others, not only upwards but also outwards, by germinating new seeds, new saplings, and through links, networks, reproduction and adaptation. Trees die, but many live on through others who took root because of them. In short, our reading of the experience of sustainable development is as an organic process, which, although driven by its own inner logic, requires the investment of human will and agency both by individuals and through the broader social environment.

However, academic scholarship has, by and large, been somewhat indifferent to this experience. Instead, it has been oriented mainly towards serving the first two visions of the future. Data collection, analytical insight, framework development and methodological refinement all seem to start by asking how to help the policy maker realize a blueprint or how to free the market to let it serve sustainable development. It has rarely asked how to support the yet-invisible seeds of sustainable development, how to nurture civic entrepreneurship and, indeed, even

how to build upon this entrepreneurial example to make it easy for others to follow.

This last point is critical. The business sector benefits from enormous *public* investment in institutions that make it easy for the entrepreneur to innovate and the manager to imitate. Every good business school provides courses on innovation to thousands of future managers, but civic entrepreneurship has to be learned by each individual separately. Venture capitalists and incubators provide the initial support and nurturing environment for innovative business ideas, but there are hardly any such institutions in the public domain. Finally, innovation has become routinized into corporate R&D systems, which more or less automatically churn out new ideas and find ways of developing new products and processes based on these ideas; however, with a very few exceptions (for example, the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh) such diversification has not become characteristic of mature civic entrepreneurial activities. Schumpeter himself had asked whether entrepreneurship was really necessary once industrial development had reached an advanced level, presumably once these systems are put in place, and innovation has ceased to require the bold imagination of a few unique individuals.

In the long run, we too may need to ask whether the salient role we ascribe to civic entrepreneurship today will be needed tomorrow if committed governments, international organizations and philanthropic agencies create institutions analogous to those that are available to private entrepreneurs. In the short run, however, we need to ask a different set of questions: how to harness the power of the state, the market and academia to provide a congenial environment for civic entrepreneurship to flower. This is the message and the question that we wish to leave with the reader.

## **Promise: Celebrating Small Victories**

What is the recent experience of sustainable development?

Three points can be made. First, although economic growth has been significant, most environmental and social indicators of sustainable development have worsened. Second, the reason for this is not the lack of policy attention or market-led growth momentum, but the inability to convert rhetoric or potential into concrete outcomes. Third, in sharp contrast to these depressing trends, there is an abundance of will and concrete results in the realm of civil society.

Notwithstanding the success in negotiating and drafting an unprecedented number of treaties, conventions, protocols, laws and plans, there has been little progress towards sustainable development in practice. There is a dissonance between proclamation and implementation, which many observers attribute to a weakness of political will, both at the global level and national level in many countries. The weakness of global political will is evident from the lukewarm interest in the WSSD, the stalemate over the Kyoto Protocol and the limited impact of multilateral

environmental agreements, declarations on social development and expressed concerns about poverty and income inequality. At the national level as well, many governments appear to have embraced the rhetoric of sustainable development simply to obscure the unwillingness to make the changes and accept the social or economic costs of implementing them. A survey of those closely engaged in the WSSD process suggests that the political will for meaningful policy change has been even more lacking in the run up to the WSSD than in the preceding ten years (Najam *et al.*, 2002). More importantly, the experience pulled together in this series of books and described in summary form in Chapter 2 is that, wherever innovative policy instruments have produced positive changes, there has also been the active involvement of civil will.

This conclusion is equally applicable to the functioning of the market. The literature is replete with examples of the innovative practices of some of the most progressive business leaders. At the same time, a number of business associations – the most prominent being the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) – have been established explicitly to promote the incorporation of sustainability into business decisions, as well as to highlight the achievements of the business sector in this regard. Scholars have reported on the nature of innovation that is particularly germane to this issue (Parahalad and Hart, 2002). However, in terms of our analyses, these are the results of the leadership provided by the civic leaders of the business world. They represent the exercise of civil will just as much as the actions of pioneers in civil society. A summary description of the key trends in this domain is compiled in Chapter 3.

At a more aggregate level, however, it is difficult to project a similar degree of optimism regarding the functioning of the market. During the 1990s, a period corresponding but unrelated to the post-Rio years, the growth momentum picked up after the somnolent 1980s. Driven especially by trade liberalization and the deployment of new technologies, this growth has also been associated with accelerated environmental degradation, deeper social and economic inequities, and rising levels of conflict and even war. On aggregate, the world is certainly a richer planet today than it was in 1992; however, the gap between the poor and the rich has widened, conflict and violence remain unabated, life remains miserable for an ever-increasing number and the pressures on ecological systems have worsened. The evidence suggests that while markets can deliver net growth, they are as incapable of delivering sustainability as they have been on delivering equity and social justice.

The main contrary argument of the protagonists of the conventional or market approach is that in the end the market will deliver environmental quality because the affluent will demand and define it as an amenity they are willing to pay for. In environmental circles, one of the variations on this theme is referred to as the Environmental Kuznets Curve Hypothesis, which was popularized by the World Bank's *World Development Report 1992*. Under this hypothesis – for which political



backing by financial institutions and mainstream academics remains strong, notwithstanding the rather weak empirical support – environmental conditions will worsen initially with rising incomes but will eventually improve as policies, values and visions click in to change the demand structure. The hypothesis had originally generated much interest, but the consistent lack of empirical support for it seems to have begun dampening the enthusiasm. However, there remains a residual belief that environmental improvement will ultimately stem from market mechanisms under the twin motivation of changing consumer preferences and technological advancements.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this brief description are fairly straightforward. Amidst the many wilting trajectories, there is a contradictory and more promising trend; namely, highly positive developments at micro and meso levels, some led by government functionaries and departments but most by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), businesses or communities, often acting in concert through a variety of partnership and collaborative arrangements. While academics debate the alternative meanings of sustainable development, governments haggle and bargain over the punctuation marks in conventions and protocols, and markets continue to pollute and divide, NGOs, communities, businesses and individuals are putting sustainable development into practice. Instead of waiting for the proper definition of sustainable development to emerge or for the growth process to deliver, they have preoccupied themselves with building communities, sustaining livelihoods, supporting grassroots actions, restoring forests, rangelands, waterbodies and watersheds, collaborating in participatory anti-pollution programs, stopping harmful programs and projects, establishing protected areas, undertaking public-interest litigation, experimenting with renewable energy programs and initiating a myriad of other activities that together add up to the promise of sustainable development. They have often had to work with inadequate policy and institutional arrangements, perverse incentives, mixed signals from governments, incomplete scientific advice, lack of access to credit or to technical or managerial resources, but they have persevered.

These volumes collect and cull the stories of sustainable development. If ‘political will’ is defined as the ability and willingness of political leaders to overcome obstacles and mobilize social, political and financial resources in the service of collective goals, then clearly political will has been lacking for sustainable development. However, all over the world we find what could, by analogy, be termed ‘civil will’ – the resolve and commitment of civil society to overcome even more daunting obstacles in the pursuit of meaningful action towards sustainable development.

UNEP’s *Global Environmental Outlook 3* (UNEP 2000) posits a desirable but most idealistic scenario named the Great Transition, in which a combination of values, social changes, government policies and market responses lead to a sustainable future. The good news from the stories collected in this series of books is that, in fact, the

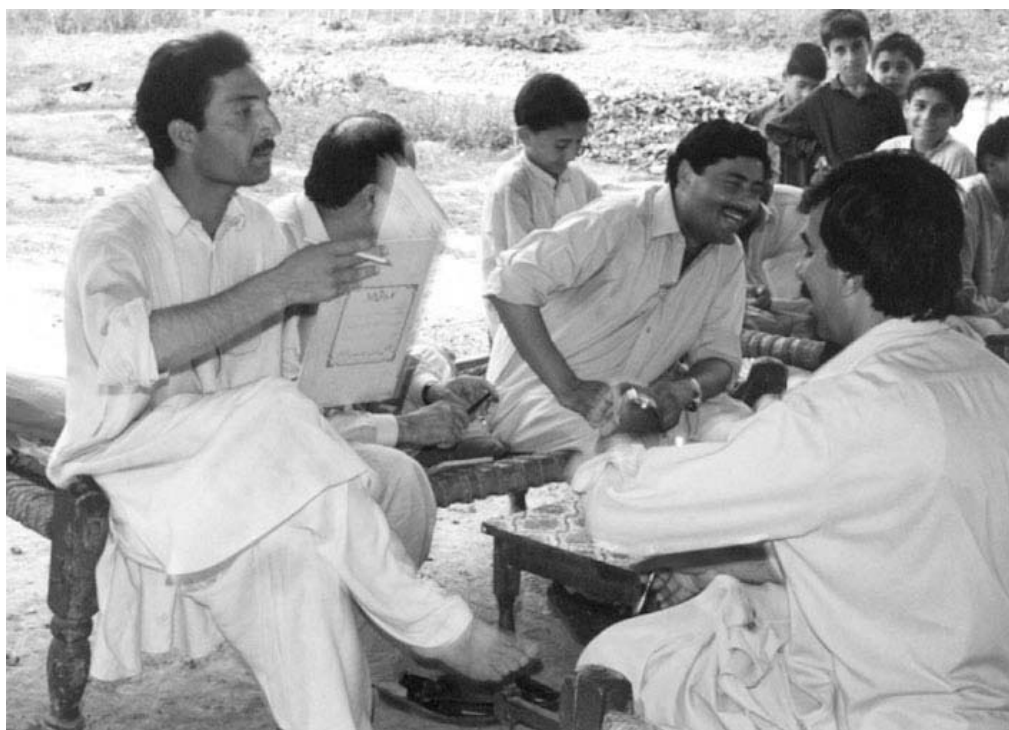
potential champions and architects of a Great Transition already exist and are active in our midst. Their victories may often have been small; they may have come most often at the micro and meso levels; they may not yet add up to sustainable development at a 'global' scale; yet, they are there and are happening all over the world. Civil will *does* exist, and it exists everywhere. The challenge is to cultivate it and to create the enabling conditions within which it can thrive and prosper.

## In Search of Sustainable Development

Yet, recent discussions of sustainable development, in academic as well as policy circles, do not give other than the most cursory attention to the potential of civil society. Much of the literature defines sustainable development in a manner that places agency almost exclusively in the hands of the government. The policy and academic literature produced by financial institutions, on the other hand, translates the entire problematique into the need for market reform: getting pricing right, internalizing costs, removing distortions and compensating for incomplete or missing markets. While the role that civil society has played is acknowledged, it is viewed as secondary and supporting in nature – as a provider of services, builder of bridges or certifier of accountability. Not much attention is paid to the significance or future promise of what we have termed 'civil will.' On the contrary, there is a presumption of a latent political will, which like the invisible hand, will make its presence felt over time, awakened perhaps through a definitive demonstration of the net benefits or profitability of optimal projects, programs and policies. This is as true of discussions amongst many civil society institutions as it is of policy debates, business discussions or academic analyses.

To use an example from the academic world of this dissonance between experience and rhetoric, one only has to examine the variety of analytical tools. These have been inherited virtually exclusively from the period of centralized planning, when the discipline of development had divided into groups favoring the market and the state respectively, the one advocating getting prices right and the other getting the *policies* right. While the so-called Washington Consensus, which favors small government and eschews reliance upon centralized planning, undermined the latter approach, its ethos and philosophy have re-emerged in the form of sustainable-development planning. Recall that the main tools of analysis – impact assessment, cost benefit analysis, aggregate planning, aggregate welfare indicators and detailed national plans and strategies – were all developed in the service of centralized planning agencies, which have since gone out of fashion and indeed have become largely irrelevant to the policy process.

Today, virtually every text on sustainable development is based explicitly or implicitly on the above framework. It starts generally with the Brundtland Commission (WCED, 1987) definition – "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation" – and goes on to depict sustainable development in the form of a familiar triangle in which the three sides represent economic, social and environmental goals. The message is that sustainable development



**Learning from practice requires humility, patience, good cheer and a genuine respect for people and their stories**

Source: NRSP-P

is an alternative way of calculating aggregate welfare – i.e., after accounting for social and environmental costs and benefits – which can help policy makers who are committed to sustainable development and face a choice between several alternatives.

This is not to deny that there is a powerful case for government intervention in defining and protecting collective social welfare, and from there, perhaps unconsciously, to the habits of thought and action developed during the era of centralized planning, nor the importance of the work on impact assessment, costing and strategy development. Yet these are, as it were, accounting frameworks that assist in tracking costs and benefits of past actions; and although like accounting systems in enterprises they need to be undertaken continuously and not only after the fact, they cannot be deemed sufficient for running successful enterprises. Analogously, notwithstanding the importance of keeping our papers in order, as it were, one should not succumb to the fallacy that this will suffice for the pursuit or promotion of sustainable development.

The end result is that the very idea of sustainable development has lost meaning. It is ironic that on the eve of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) the term is in danger of being reduced from a bold and innovative framework for making meaningful decisions to a label that anyone may place on just about anything they

find desirable. Sustainable development was originally deemed powerful – and even threatening – because it suggested the possibility of change in the status quo. Today, it is on the verge of becoming ineffectual because, in searching either for definitional precision or for fuzzy sloganeering, the concept has become increasingly divorced from its initial action orientation.

The purpose of this chapter is to invite a rethinking of the way we think about sustainable development. We do not posit a particular definition of sustainable development but a particular way of conceptualizing the discussions on sustainable development. The standpoint from which one views things and how one chooses to frame them, affects what one sees. To put it most bluntly, the reason so many discussions on sustainable development seem bland is not a reflection of the concept itself but of how we have tended to analyze and review it.

The alternative we propose is not a new conception but a culmination and strengthening of existing trends that have found increasing resonance with the goal of sustainability. Its key features have been described in Chapter 4, not as a prefigured and internally consistent ideology, but rather as a composite sketch of characteristics that are associated with the recent practice of sustainability. The component that links all of these features to each other is its rootedness within society and community. In this framework, action is located within the strategies and aspirations of living communities. More broadly, the state is placed within civil society – not only in the formal sense of seeking legitimacy through electoral democracy, but also by identifying the drivers of social change elsewhere. Similarly, the market is viewed not merely as a justification for policy impotence, but as a social institution, harnessed by society through investments in social capital to meet social goals. Science and technology, similarly, are not perceived as autonomous domains, driven by their logic towards excess and danger, but as embedded within social norms and ethical values.

Another significant feature of this approach is that, unlike conventional theoretical analyses, it focuses neither on the *outcome* nor ‘end result’ of sustainable development – namely, the simultaneous achievement of ecological balance, social justice and economic prosperity – nor on the *process* through which markets or social actions can best influence the outcomes. Rather, it focuses centrally on the starting point of sustainable development, namely the *will* – the motivation, the incentives, the background, the resolve, in short the entrepreneurial spirit – of those who champion sustainable development in practice and define it through their practices. Naturally, this is not meant to deny the importance of either outcome or process but to suggest that there is an equally important third approach that needs to be added to the mix.

A third key characteristic is its perspective on uncertainty. If uncertainty is deemed as fundamental in sustainable development – and it is difficult to see how it could not be so – and if the full range of consequences of current actions cannot be known, it makes sense to focus on intentions, will and judgment. Analytical frameworks

interpret uncertainty mainly in terms of a probabilistic approach, in which the probabilities of alternative future outcomes can be ascertained from empirical regularities or expert judgment. This allows for the articulation of optimal policy in terms of expected welfare. However, where uncertainty is fundamental – where, in the words of the economist, John Maynard Keynes, “we simply do not know” – such an approach will necessarily fail. In such a condition, we are back in the realm of the uncertain and infeasible future, where we cannot rely on technocratic interventions, and where there is no substitute for human judgment. What drives action in these situations is not simply the probability of a certain process leading to a certain outcome but the will to seek desirable outcomes and processes.

## Conclusion

To put all this in terms of the agenda for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), here is the challenge before the WSSD: If a goal of WSSD is to put sustainable development back on track, then one has to ask what the best entry point for action is. We present some answers in Chapter 6, as an invitation to thought rather than a conclusion of our analysis.

Existing treatment of sustainable development is oriented principally towards the state and the market, or analogously towards an outcome-centered or process-centered approach. On the other hand, the practitioners of sustainable development have sought mainly to realize it through their actions and statements. They have not tried to define it or theorize upon it in terms that would create the best conditions for sustaining their energies and initiatives. The time has come to change this. To paraphrase Karl Marx, “activists have tried to change the world long enough; the time has come to define it.”

Arguably, we could get to sustainable development solely through the top-down dictates of reformed policy; we could, but we are unlikely to, because the necessary political will simply does not exist. Theoretically, we could at least get some improvement through market forces; maybe so, but only in theory and only if we are willing to suspend belief in the fundamental nature of markets. While one needs unrelentingly to push the state as well as markets, neither is likely to be enough in and of itself. If the discussions at the WSSD start and end with the conventional approach to sustainable development, the next ten years might turn out to be no more fruitful than the previous ten.

The decade-long discussions on sustainable development bring to mind the observations of the great economist, John Maynard Keynes (1963), about the Treaty of Paris in 1919, “The proceedings...all had this air of extraordinary importance and unimportance at the same time. The decisions seemed charged with consequences to the future of human society; yet the air whispered that the word was not flesh, that it was futile, insignificant, of no effect, dissociated from events...”

It is time for the word to become flesh.



# Chapter 2:

# Policy Reform for

# Sustainable Development

The King: *Venerable Nagasena, will you converse with me?*  
Nagasena: *If your Majesty will speak with me as wise men converse, I will; but if your Majesty speaks with me as kings converse, I will not.*  
The King: *How then converse the wise, venerable Nagasena?*  
Nagasena: *The wise do not get angry when they are driven into a corner, kings do.*

– **Millindapanha’s second-century colloquy**

The ten years since the Rio Earth Summit have been phenomenally busy in terms of sustainable development policy. Yet the result of all this activity has been less than spectacular.

On the one hand we can just celebrate the proliferation of policy activities in the name of sustainable development at every level. Today, environmental conventions are spread across the entire spectrum of environmental concerns; international, national and even sub-national institutions have emerged with a mandate for creating and implementing sustainable development policy; regional, national and sub-national plans for sustainable development have become a growth industry in their own right. This hectic, sometimes crippling so, level of policy activity had been hoped for but not really expected ten years ago. Those who had wished that Rio would result in a spurt of policy creation all over the world should be happy. Their wish has come true.

On the other hand much, too much, of this policy activity has failed to translate into action. Most international environment conventions remain empty shells that have been diluted by lowest-common-denominator haggling (as in the Desertification Convention) and in many cases stalled by political stalemate (as in the Kyoto Protocol for climate change). New institutions, ranging from the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development to the host of national Environmental Ministries that were established in the run-up to or immediate aftermath of the Rio Earth Summit, have been stymied by a near-chronic lack of resources and political

support. The hectic activity around sustainable development plans and strategies have suffered a similar fate, mostly reduced to elaborate wish lists, rather than meaningful expressions of political commitment to sustainable development. Those who had dreamt that the policy momentum coming out of Rio would trigger practical action on the ground must be disappointed. Their dream remains unrealized.

The scholarly discourse on the legacy of the Rio Earth Summit highlights both the need to celebrate the surfeit of policy creation and to lament the implementation deficit (see Finger, 2002; Hass, 2002; Najam, 2002a; Najam *et al.*, 2002; Wapner, 2002). Our goal is not to adjudicate over this mixed legacy. Our interest is to understand the forces that spurred progress where progress was achieved and those that blocked it where it was not. Our evidence, as elsewhere, is the experience of sustainable development practitioners from around the world as contained in the six volumes that accompany this book. It may be a truism that policy reform will advance or stall with the presence or absence, respectively, of political will for reform. Our gloss on this truism is merely that ‘political will’ can be motivated and is generally motivated by the forces of civic entrepreneurship which is itself a manifestation of ‘civil will.’

This is a non-trivial finding. Many have lamented the lack of political will for sustainable development, and even more have wondered how such political will might be created. The evidence gathered by our practitioners suggests that expressions of civil will and civic entrepreneurship are potent mechanisms for spurring political will. Wherever we find meaningful headway being made in terms of implementation of sustainable development policy, we see the all-too-visible hand of civil will. Civil will motivates political will in three distinct but related ways. First, it can *push* political will and thereby policy reform through awareness-raising, advocacy and agitation. Second, it can *pull* policy reform by filling the gaps and providing such policy services as policy research, policy advice and, in a few cases, actual policy development. Third, it can *create spaces for champions of reform* within policy systems so that they can assume a salience and create constituencies for change that could not be mobilized otherwise.

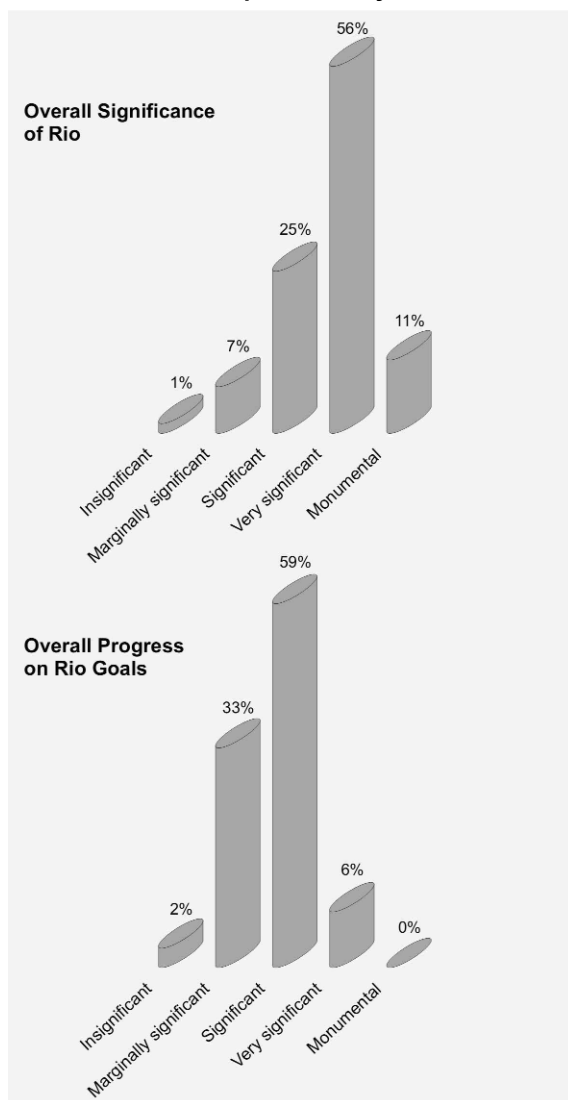
In the following sections, we will review the experience of various attempts for policy reform over the last ten years, and identify how civil will has been able to actualize policy reform by pushing, pulling and creating spaces for expressions of political will.

## From Rio to Reality

A recent survey of over 250 experts and practitioners from civil society, business, governments and the media, from seventy-one different countries – with an average experience of nearly twelve years each in international environmental policy and, between them, a cumulative experience of nearly three thousand years in this field –



**Figure 1: Rio Evaluations: Results of a Global Experts Survey**



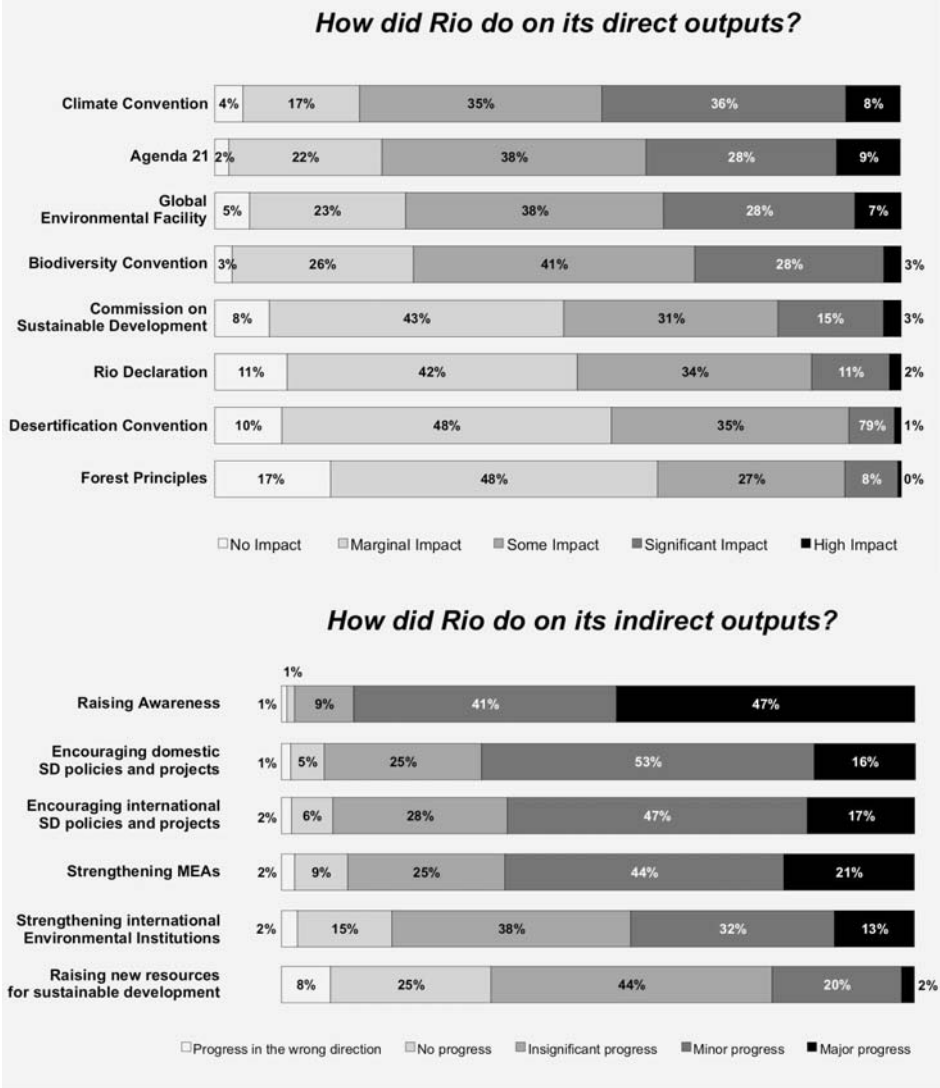
Source: Najam *et al.*, 2002

came up with a rather startling result. When asked to evaluate the overall significance of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, an overwhelming majority (just under seventy percent) rated it as a ‘very significant’ or even ‘monumental’ event. Yet none – absolutely none – of the respondents was willing to rate the implementation of Rio’s overall goals as being ‘great.’ Less than six percent saw ‘significant progress’ as having been made on these goals and thirty-five percent considered the progress to insignificant or non-existent. (For full results from survey see Najam *et al.*, 2002).

Although the consistency of this result across regions and sectors was remarkable, it was not entirely surprising. Astute commentators have come up with a similarly nuanced evaluation of Rio’s legacy (for example, Sachs *et al.*, 2002). Indeed, the survey respondents have presented us with a sophisticated analysis that resonates entirely with the thrust of the national and regional analyses presented in the accompanying volumes. The Rio Earth Summit has to be considered a success if you gauge it in terms of the policy activity that was generated by UNCED, but it shows poorly if we focus on the

implementation of these grand policy dictates. In response to another question on the same survey, experts and practitioners rated the efficacy of particular policy instruments that came out of Rio (Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration, the climate, biodiversity and desertification conventions, the forests principles, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Global Environmental Facility) considerably lower than the indirect results of the Earth Summit such as awareness-raising and encouraging domestic and international sustainable development policies and projects.

Figure 2: Rating the Rio Products: Results of a Global Experts Survey



Source: Najam *et al.*, 2002

The evidence gathered by our collaborators validates this finding both in terms of hectic policy development and in relation to lackadaisical policy implementation. A review of this evidence suggests that sustainable development policy activity in the last decade has concentrated on three particular areas: at the international level on the negotiation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); at the national level on the development of action plans and strategies for environment and development; and at the local level on local policy development in response to Agenda 21 provisions. Let us briefly review each of these.

**Multilateral Environmental Agreements.** Global negotiations related to MEAs have become particularly intense in the last decade. Indeed, this MEA proliferation has led to serious negotiation fatigue, particularly amongst developing countries which do not have the human or financial resources to participate in these increasingly more complex and increasingly more intense global negotiations (von Moltke, 2001a; Najam, 2002b). The Rio conference itself laid the foundation for a host of international instruments including the Climate Convention, the Biodiversity Convention, the Forests Principles, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Global Environmental Facility. The decision to place the negotiation of a Desertification Convention was also made at Rio and gathered steam immediately afterwards. Although the Forest Principles were stillborn, various protocols have been negotiated in the biodiversity and climate conventions in the last ten years. New treaties, including the Convention on Prior Informed Consent and on Persistent Organic Pollutants were negotiated in the post-Rio period but claim that their motivation came from Rio. Each of these maintains that sustainable development is their overarching goal. Even agreements that were negotiated well before Rio have seen increasing momentum and interest and have begun taking on the flavor of the Rio treaties, especially by adopting the language of sustainable development. These include, for example, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Ozone Convention and its attendant Protocols, the various agreements related to fisheries and whaling. Sustainable development is now also a proclaimed goal of the World Trade Organization (WTO) which is increasingly having to deal with issues of environment and development, nearly entirely because of civic entrepreneurs who have ‘pushed’ the issues on the agenda (Najam, 2000a; Halle, 2001; Najam and Robins, 2001; Banuri and Qadir, 2002). A similar movement of redefinition has taken place at the institutional level; indeed, most international organizations, including the World Bank for example, now proclaim sustainable development to be a key goal.

Yet, this flurry of negotiation activity and redefinition of institutional intent is not to be confused with movement towards the stated sustainable development goals of these agreements (Agarwal *et al.*, 1999, 2002). While sustainable development has been taken more seriously by some MEAs than others – such as the desertification convention, for example (Burns, 1995; Chasek, 1997; Corell, 1999b) – it has generally become a politically correct slogan from which governments cannot run but are unwilling or unable to implement. The task becomes even more difficult because, unlike the international trade regime which is rule-based and specifies clear agreements on what countries are not required to do, MEAs are what may be called ‘more regimes’ (Banuri and Qadir, 2002). These provide only moral injunctions and encouragement to countries to do what amounts to ‘the right thing.’ MEAs have generally led to broad commitments on principles rather than specific agreement on implementable regulations; sustainable development has been reduced to one of these broad principles that everyone can agree to in principle but whose specifics no one is prepared to discuss.

Born amidst much promise and expectation, the notion of sustainable development has now become a much-tortured concept. It suffers at the same time from the pangs of over-definition and the turmoil of over-generalization. On the one hand, efforts to impose rigid and precise definitions on what was meant to be a flexible and encompassing concept has robbed it of its most vital essence — its ability or at least promise to innovate and be creative in the pursuit of workable solutions to multi-dimensional problems. On the other hand, although originally understood to describe a certain category of actions and processes rather than a defined destination, it is now used increasingly as a political slogan, as if it defines some promised land that we will ultimately arrive at rather than a framework of key principles that should proscribe our actions. It is ironic that at the eve of what is billed as the World Summit on *Sustainable Development*, the term is in danger of being reduced from a bold and innovative framework for making meaningful decisions to a label that anyone may place on just about anything they find desirable. Indeed, the term's 'constructive ambiguity,' which was once considered so charming, has been so abused that it may no longer be constructive. What was initially seen as an invitation to build bridges between competing demands (of environmental integrity, economic development and social justice) and between competing constituencies (business, civil society, governments) has been reduced to an exercise in shouting across the divides; a process in which the chasms have sometimes become more, rather than less, stark. Sustainable development was originally deemed powerful—and even threatening—because it suggested the possibility of change in the status quo. Today it is on the verge of becoming ineffectual because, in searching either for definitional precision or for fuzzy sloganeering, the concept has become increasingly divorced from its initial action orientation.



**International environmental negotiations have become much more intense and frequent since Rio setting in a sense of 'negotiation fatigue'**

Source: IISD / Leila Mead photographer

A good case in point is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Beyond the fact that the Kyoto Protocol has been bogged down by the

United States' withdrawal from it, the Convention and the Protocol are unlikely to be instrumental in encouraging the practice of sustainable development in their current form. Although its preamble clearly defines sustainable development as one of its ultimate goals, the convention has consistently fallen short of addressing this goal in any meaningful manner (Cohen *et al.*, 1998; Najam and Sagar, 1998; Najam and Page, 1998; Agarwal and Narain, 1999; Banuri and Sagar, 1999; Munasinghe, 2000; Sokona *et al.*, 2002). While the most recent assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has begun addressing the issue (Banuri *et al.*, 2001), it still remains on the periphery of the policy discourse.

And yet, whatever few inroads the Convention and Protocol have been able to make have come largely because of the constant pressure from civil society. The civic entrepreneurship of Northern and Southern NGOs was instrumental in the acceptance of both the original Climate Convention and in the subsequent Kyoto Protocol (Mintzer and Leonard, 1994; Agarwal *et al.*, 1999). Civil will remains the one most-potent force that has kept the Convention and the Protocol alive despite the refusal of the world's largest carbon emitting country to taken on any binding commitments under the regime. In this process civil society has not only demanded action through activism, it has also invested heavily in policy research to find ways of breaking the climate impasse.

**National Planning for Sustainable Development.** The most hectic policy activity in terms of sustainable development planning has happened at the national level. Integrated policy exercises such National Conservation Strategies (NCSs), National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs), and National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs) have been carried out in many countries – with some countries actually boasting of two or more of these. In addition, the various treaty secretariats and the Commission on Sustainable Development have asked most countries to prepare and submit issue-specific national policy reports and action plans. Several poverty-reduction plans – most recently the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) – have also begun requiring a focus on sustainable development. No matter what name they go by, there is clearly no dearth of country-specific policy strategies for sustainable development (IIED, 2000; OECD/UNDP, 2002; Dalal-Clayton and Bass, 2002).

Box 1 provides a few exemplars of the type of national policy strategies that have been developed in various countries and discussed in the accompanying volumes. Each of these deals with sustainable development in some significant way. Note that all of these are incomplete lists and any given country is likely to have a multitude of such plans. The purpose of Box 1 is to be representative rather than comprehensive. The point to be reiterated here is that sheer policy activity has been quite impressive in the last decade or so.

**Box 1: National Plans for Sustainable Development (some examples)**

**Bangladesh**

National Conservation Strategy (1992)  
National Environmental Management Action Plan (1997)

**Colombia**

National Environmental Plan (1995)

**Costa Rica**

National System for Sustainable Development (1993)  
Conservation Strategy for Sustainable Development (1996)

**Czech Republic**

National Environmental Health Action Plan (1999)

**Dominican Republic**

National Strategy and Action Plan for Biodiversity Conservation (1997)

**Estonia**

National Environmental Strategy (1997)  
National Environmental Action Plan (1998)  
Sustainable Development Strategy (2000)

**India**

National Strategy for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (1990)  
National River Conservation Plan (1997)

**Iran**

National Strategy for Environment and Sustainable Development (1995)

**Nicaragua**

National Environmental Action Plan (1993)

**Nigeria**

National Conservation Strategy (1986)  
National Agenda 21 (1999)

**Pakistan**

National Conservation Strategy (1991)  
Forestry Sector Master Plan (1992)  
Biodiversity Action Plan (1993)  
National Environmental Action Plan (2001)  
Protected Area System Review and Action Plan (2001)

**Philippines**

National Agenda 21 (1996)

**Senegal**

National Environmental Action Plan (1997)  
Action Plan for fighting Desertification (1998)  
National Biodiversity Strategy (1999)  
Action Strategy for Sustainable Development (1999)

**Slovenia**

National Agenda 21 (1995)  
National Environmental Action Plan (1999)

**Thailand**

Environmental Quality Management Plan (1999)

**Uganda**

National Environmental Action Plan (1990)  
Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development (1998)

**Vietnam**

National Environmental Action Plan (1998)

**Zimbabwe**

National Conservation Strategy (1987)  
Natural Resource Management Plan (1992)  
Environmental Action Program (1994)  
Biodiversity Action Plan (1998)  
Action Plan for Desertification (1998)

However, just as treaty negotiation has failed to lead to meaningful treaty implementation, strategy formation has not always translated into strategy

actualization. Bass and Dalal-Clayton (2002) have identified a number of key reasons for this:

- Many strategies were not, and did not aim to be, *integrated* into a country's mainstream decision-making systems.
- Few links exist between *policy* and *on-the-ground realities*, so that policy debate did not learn from the field and people in the field did not participate in debate.
- Out-of-date *information*, inadequate time and resources for *research*, inappropriate *methodologies* of analysis, which were not up to the holistic task. Existing *sources of (local) knowledge* were often overlooked in favour of the analyses of (external) strategy consultants, or repetition of facts/analyses emanating from those international bodies that promoted the strategy framework.
- Very many strategies were, in effect, wish lists, lacking clear *priorities* or achievable targets.
- The base of *participation* was often too narrow, usually due to lack of time, resources, and good means of identifying the diversity of stakeholders, along with weak rules on participation processes and outcomes.
- Strategies were rarely supportive of *existing processes, strategies and capacities*, but attempted to start something new and often with a forced timetable.
- A large number of strategies were not *country-led* but were induced or even imposed by external agencies.
- In developing countries, different external agencies pushed their own strategy 'brands,' leading to *competition*, 'policy inflation' and capacity burdens.

Bass and Dalal-Clayton (2002), like others, suggest that the problem with the implementation of these strategies is exactly the same as the reason for the non-implementation of most international environmental agreements; a chronic lack of political will. The evidence from the country and regional studies included in the accompanying volumes resonate with these findings. However, they add one very important ingredient to them: they highlight quite clearly that while many of these national sustainable development strategy processes have failed to deliver in terms of action on the ground, some have in fact delivered more than others. More importantly, the consistent pattern is that those that delivered better results were invariably the ones motivated by civic entrepreneurs and structured around existing expressions of civil will. Consider, for example, the case of the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy (Qadir, 2002: Vol. 4: 277). This was clearly a product of civic entrepreneurs. Not only was it demanded by civic entrepreneurs, it was actually written in consultation with and, to a large extent, by civic entrepreneurs (Runnalls,

1995; Najam, 1999b). In retrospect, the strategy has tended to be implemented best where its recommendations have been built on the energies of latent civil will in society, and implementation has been slowest where it presumed the eventual evolution of political will for structural change (Smillie and Hailey, 2001). Later in this chapter, we will discuss more on how civic entrepreneurs invest their civil will in policy processes to spur political will.

**Development of Local and Regional Policy Initiatives.** Finally, there has been a flurry of local and sub-national initiatives in terms of sustainable development policy. These have most often been carried out in the context of Agenda 21 and have taken on various forms and shapes. In general, such initiatives have taken one of three forms.

First, and this seems to have happened in only a few select cases, regional strategies have been made to mimic the national sustainable development planning exercises. Since these are fairly expensive and time-consuming exercises, these have usually been conducted at the provincial/state level as in the case of the Gujarat National Environmental Action Plan in India or the Balochistan and Sarhad Conservation Strategies in Pakistan. In the case of Pakistan in particular, the provincial conservation strategies have been powerful examples of civic entrepreneurship and have been a direct outgrowth of the success of the national conservation strategy, which was itself demanded and designed in a civil society-led process (Qadir, 2002: Vol. 4: 330). IUCN-Pakistan was the lead organization in the development of all these initiatives which were able to capitalize on latent civil will in two important ways. At the conceptual level, these initiatives are strong expressions of civil society's belief in adopting an integrated policy approach to issues of sustainable development (Fisher, 1993; Najam, 1999b). Notwithstanding the subsequent lack of political will to implement these strategies gave centrality to an integrated approach through their cross-sectoral nature and multi-stakeholder partnerships. At the practical level, these strategies vitalize the expanded 'policy communities' which extend beyond the traditional groups of governmental officials to include civil society policy entrepreneurs as well (Kingdon, 1984; Clark, 1991; Banuri and Khan, 2000). This is particularly apparent in the Sarhad Conservation Strategy where the system of multi-stakeholders roundtables has now taken firm root.

A second type of initiative relates not as much to making a sustainable development strategy for a region or province, but to facilitate strategic policy exercises at a local and decentralized level. Examples of such initiatives include the District Environment Action Program in Zimbabwe, launched in 1994 (Mutepfa *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 389) and the widespread local programs in Central and Eastern Europe (Jüsii *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 7: 8). The Zimbabwe district program is distinct from the Pakistan provincial strategies. Instead of formalizing an explicit district strategy, it supports local NGOs and community organizations to develop their own strategies for sustainable development in consultation with multi-sectoral strategy teams including officials from various relevant ministries. Although the implementation experience of this initiative has also been mixed, it has worked best where it capitalized on



existing forces of civic entrepreneurship and civil will in the communities. It tended to fail in instances where the multi-disciplinary teams were forced and failed to engage civil society actors. In retrospect it was not the case that existing political will opens doors for civic entrepreneurs; rather, the presence of active and vibrant civil society initiatives nudges the political will and enables effective bridges of partnership to be built.

The third type of sustainable development policy initiatives relate most directly to devising local Agenda 21s for local communities, especially including small towns and municipalities. Such initiatives have been reported in all of our regional volumes; they worked best where local policy entrepreneurs within the governmental structures have been able to forge partnerships with local community groups in a synergistic relationship between political and civil will. One example comes from the outskirts of Dakar, Senegal, where the town government of Pikine partnered with ENDA and other local and community NGOs to start a process of dialogue and conversation for envisioning a more sustainable future (Cisse *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 315-320). The city of Tartu in Estonia chose a similar route and supplemented a grant from the Association of Estonian Cities with its own budget to initiate a process of devising a Tartu Agenda 21 with the active participation of city officials, regional and local NGOs, business leaders, schools, politicians, citizens and national experts (Jüssi *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 7: 42).

**Civil Will as a Trigger for Political Will.** This brief review points towards two important conclusions. First, there has in fact been significant activity in terms of devising sustainable development policies at every relevant level – international, national and local. Indeed, although we have not discussed this explicitly here, the same holds true for the creation of new institutions for managing sustainable development policies. New institutions, including the Commission for Sustainable Development and several MEA secretariats, have emerged at the international level; just about every country now has a dedicated ministry for environment, which claims to be working for sustainable development; and many government agencies have also emerged at sub-national and local levels with similar mandates. The challenge is no longer the development of new policies and institutions for sustainable development; this challenge has already been met because of the momentum and resources generated by Rio. However, too many of these policies and institutions have come in response to external pressures (for example, many National Environmental Action Plans) rather than domestic and locally rooted agendas. Because of this the political will to follow through on these policy pronouncements has been missing and all too often the formulation of policy rather than its implementation becomes its ultimate goal. The challenge, then, relates to the implementation rather than the formulation of sustainable development policy and the problem here is an acute and globally pervasive lack of political will to make the changes that are required.

Our second conclusion relates directly to this. In asking practitioners from around the world to provide us with what they believe are examples of potential sustainable

development in practice, we find that a common feature in all these examples is that they all capitalized on the energies of civic entrepreneurs. At one level, policy entrepreneurs for sustainable development have tended to come mostly from civil society and where they have not, these policy entrepreneurs have been able to consciously construct new policy alliances with civic entrepreneurs (Majone, 1989; Fisher, 1998; Banuri and Khan, 2000; Najam, 2000b). This validates the view that civil society organizations are best conceptualized as policy entrepreneurs since their rationale is to trigger large scale social change in line with their defining vision and they do this at various stages of the policy process acting as policy monitors, policy advocates, policy innovators, and service providers (Najam, 1999b). At a second level, these volumes expand on this finding and make a new contribution by suggesting a possible answer to the common and commonly ignored question, Where does political will come from? The stories detailed in this set of books suggest that one of the places it comes from is 'civil will.' More specifically, there are at least three distinct strategies through which civic entrepreneurs have been able to translate the existing 'civil will' in society into a visible 'political will.' The next three sections will discuss these three strategies individually.

## **Pushing Sustainable Development Policy**

In the early 1990s farmers groups in Thailand began a campaign demanding protection and encouragement for community forestry. This eventually led to the creation of a civil society coalition called the North Farmers' Group Network, which was able to push the government of Thailand to adopt a Community Forest Act. During the same period, the Farmers' Assembly in the northeast of the country began a campaign for repealing a Wildlife Reserve Area demarcation that was encroaching on farmers' lands, and the Federation of Indigenous Fishermen in the South launched an advocacy campaign to protect coastal resources from illegal fishing. (de la Rosa, 2002: Vol. 6: 242-243).

One of the key purposes of civil society organizations is to 'push' public policy in the direction they consider desirable. Sometimes they push through gentle persuasion, at other times through persistent awareness-raising; often they launch elaborate advocacy campaigns, and at other times resort to spirited agitation. The purpose in each case is the same, to actively seek to change the direction of policy from what it otherwise might be. The lesson seems to be that, while it may not always be possible, policy can sometimes be 'pushed around' by civic entrepreneurs. To continue with examples from Thailand, in 1988 the construction of Nam Choan Dam was suspended; in 1995, local communities received damage compensation after the construction of Pak Mun Dam; and also in 1995, the plan to build a garbage-burning electric power-generation plant in Hangdong was withdrawn. (de la Rosa, 2002: Vol. 7: 222).

A rather different but equally effective approach to pushing policy reform for sustainable development also comes from Thailand; in this instance from the Nan province which is one of the more remote and sparsely populated parts of the country. Located in the eastern part of Northern Thailand, with Lao PDR on its

eastern border, eighty-five percent of the area in the province is mountainous and is inhabited by the Thais, Tai Leu, Hmong, Mien (Yao), H'tin and Khamu. Agricultural production is the main source of income. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the region's forests came under severe stress as many logging concessions were granted by the government. Deforestation brought about by commercial logging had serious effects on the watershed resulting in droughts, prolonged dry seasons and erosion and flooding in the wet season. By the late 1980s the villagers from the region had begun agitating for change. Protests, including rallies of more than five hundred protesters, failed to convince either the government or the logging companies to change their practice. So the community decided to push at the limits of policy by enacting rules of their own. (de la Rosa, 2002: Vol. 5: 242-243).

In June 1990, Phraknu Pitak, one of the so-called 'ecology monks' of Thailand, performed the first forest ordination ceremony in Nan at Bahn Khiew Muang. The community forest covering about 400 acres of land was declared a community reserve and letters were sent to the neighboring communities announcing the creation of this protected area, and that it was forbidden to cut trees or hunt in this community forest. Since government was not willing to declare their forests a protected area, the community decided to do it themselves. Once word of this forest ordination spread, loggers became reluctant to even seek concessions in that particular forest since they knew that getting labor to work on the concession would become very difficult. The villagers still maintain their protected forest, which is now considered a model project and is visited frequently by eco-tourists from across Thailand and from abroad.

Since then, other community groups have joined the initiative, expanded the scope of their conservation activities, and are now organized under the banner of the Huk Muang Nan Foundation. By the end of the 1990s, the Foundation, which can be appropriately described as a 'policy collective,' comprised of a hundred and seventy organizations maintaining thirty-nine community forests and fifty-three river conservation zones. The movement has helped strengthen community regulations, establish maps for village boundaries and assist in training communities to use the participatory planning processes. It has worked with communities to formulate village regulations. Over the years the Thai Forests Department has come to realize that these communities can be partners rather than adversaries in the policy process and have come to respect these community policies. More than that, they have begun working with these communities to enact and implement their own policies. For example, in the sub-district of Saeng Thong, community rules were strengthened through the formation of a network that is supported by the local government. Some of the rules that were jointly established and are jointly implemented by the communities and the local government include:

- Those who cultivate in headwater forests are fined Baht 2,000 per rai.
- Those who burn fields and allow fires to spread into neighbouring forests are fined Baht 1,000.

- Those who want to burn their upland fields must first establish a firebreak and inform the village committee five days before the burning, otherwise a fine of Baht 1,000 is enforced.

What is striking about this case, and about many other stories recounted in the accompanying volumes, is that a community that was confronted with a lack of political will for change decided to push the policy process through its own civil will and in doing so created new political will for sustainable development. Just as agitation, activism and awareness can ‘push’ public policy and political will, the communities of the Nan region demonstrated that so can action. Political will was created in this case, as it is in others, because the force of civil will overwhelmed the earlier lack of political will. For this transformation to take place, however, a potent civic entrepreneur had to be present to plant that first seed of change; in Nan, Thailand, Phraknu Pitak was that civic entrepreneur.

Examples of civic entrepreneurs pushing policy reform can be found at all levels, from the local to the international. Although the examples from Thailand cited here relate to local and national initiatives, they are not very different from what happens internationally. For example, both CITES and the Biodiversity Convention came about, at least in part, because of the civic entrepreneurship of IUCN-The World Conservation Union. Innovations in the climate-change regime have similarly been motivated largely by the civil will of NGOs around the world, including groups such as the Centre for Science and Environment in India, that have pushed the envelope of policy well beyond what it might otherwise have been on issues related to climate change, sustainable development, and equity concerns (see Agarwal *et al.*, 1998, 2002).



**The formal Plenary ends without agreement at the Sixth Conference of the Parties (Part I) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bonn, Germany**

Source: IISD / Leila Mead photographer

Civic entrepreneurs generally ‘push’ policy reform in their roles as monitors and as advocates. As monitors they perform the function of keeping policy ‘honest.’ In this capacity they not only act as whistle-blowers for policies that are not being implemented properly, but they also keep track of issues that are likely to, or should, impact the shape of new policies. As advocates they lobby directly for the policy options they prefer, or agitate against the ones they oppose. They build strategic coalitions and public support through information dissemination, public education and resource mobilization. (Najam, 1999b; Korten, 1990; Clark, 1991; Fisher, 1998; Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

## **Pulling Sustainable Development Policy**

Although the popular image of civil society organizations, particularly in the area of sustainable development policy, is that of policy ‘pushers’ – agitators, advocates, awareness-raisers – the fact of the matter is that civil society tends to spend far more time, energy and resources ‘pulling’ sustainable development policy along. Civic entrepreneurs can pull policy reform by making up for deficits in political will by providing policy services such as policy research, policy advice, and, in some cases, actual policy development. The national and provincial Conservation Strategies in Pakistan, already mentioned above, are a good example of civic entrepreneurs pulling sustainable development policy. Indeed, the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy as well the Provincial Conservation Strategies for Sarhad and Balochistan were all governmental policy processes that were led by civil society organizations, with IUCN-Pakistan playing the lead role and organizing input from other NGOs not only for policy research and advice but for the actual drafting of these governmental strategies (Qadir, 2002: Vol. 4: 327-331).

Similar examples of civic entrepreneurs pulling political will for policy reform to a higher plateau than where it would otherwise be by actually providing policy services to government initiatives can be found in just about any country of the world at just about any time. Consider the case of the Bangladesh National Environmental Management Action Plan. This exercise was different from the Pakistan Conservation Strategies in that the Action Plan was undertaken by a government-led team; however, it is similar in that it also involved the direct and active involvement of a cross-section of civic entrepreneurs (Ahmed *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 91). More than that, both are good examples of civil society pulling the weight of sustainable development policy because in each case civil will was able to pull policy noticeably further than it might have gone on the existent ‘political will’ alone. The key point to be made here is that pull happens not simply because civil society organizations are involved, but only when this involvement enables the policy or its implementation to be noticeably more and better oriented towards sustainable development than it might otherwise have been. This can happen either because government formally asks civil society to pull sustainable development policy or because civil society takes on this challenge on its own.

The story of the ‘regional sustainability agendas’ from Chile illustrates this point quite nicely. The Sustainable Chile Programme was set up in 1997 alongside the Brazilian

and Uruguayan programs, forming the Sustainable Conosur Network. In Chile this initiative was undertaken by the Ecology Policy Institute (Instituto de Ecología Política), the National Ecology Action Network (Red Nacional de Acción Ecológica), the Environmental Conflicts Observatory (Observatorio de Conflictos Ambientales), and the Universidad Bolivariana. The government of Chile had already stated its formal commitment to implementing Agenda 21, but the political will to move beyond the realm of statements and into actual policy development was conspicuously absent. The premise of this project was to organize the civil will that was already present within various civil society actors into a coherent network that could work towards envisioning and operationalizing strategies for moving towards a more Sustainable Chile. This is a case of civil will pulling sustainable development policy because civil will was invested not in opposition to political will, but as a way to supplement it. Unlike the earlier example from the Nan Province in Thailand, this was not a case of civic entrepreneurs defiantly ignoring government, rather here is a case of civic entrepreneurs stepping up to do what government has said it wants to do but has not come about to because of a lack of that magical ingredient, political will.

The program went about its task by identifying key regions in the country for which sustainability agendas were to be devised through a process of intense civic discourse and consultation. As many as thirty organizations were involved in each region, including NGOs, social organisations, syndicates, academic institutions, church bodies, ecclesiastical authorities, human rights organisations, student groups and indigenous organisations. The process adopted entailed detailed and broad participation of various stakeholders, including government, on what they considered to be the sustainability agenda for their region. Interestingly, each region was given complete autonomy in defining time periods and deadlines for their processes in recognition that such a process could neither be rushed nor be tailored to only one design.



**IUCN-Pakistan has worked with government to develop National and Provincial Conservation Strategies in Pakistan**

Source: IUCN-P

Once each of the regional priorities was edited and published, discussion forums were held to disseminate the results and proposals contained in the agendas. At the end of 1999 a meeting took place in Santiago to evaluate the work and work out future steps. The regions of Tarapacá, Atacama, Bio Bio, Araucanía and Magallanes took on the next challenge: to initiate a direct dialogue with the government sector and other relevant actors in the region (universities and other social movements or groups), to begin implementing the proposals already generated. This, of course, is where the initiative began to really pull at government policy and, in that process, to elevate the political will to a level higher than where it had been prior to this intervention. This process is now well underway and various regions have chosen to focus on different issues, given their own pressing priorities. The process has been one of turning civil capital into policy capital by providing government with policy services – in this case policy advice that was unsolicited but not necessarily unwelcome.

The literature has well documented the role civil society organizations play as providers of policy development and policy implementation services to government (Smith and Lipsky, 1993; Charlton and May, 1995). Indeed, as has been noted elsewhere, “service delivery is what more citizen organizations do more often than anything else (Najam, 1999b).” Our point is slightly more nuanced. It is not simply to note that civil society organizations often provide policy services; rather, it is to suggest that this is a common and often successful strategy for enhancing the existent level of political will by imbuing it with civil will.

## **Creating Space for Sustainable Development Policy**

One of the consequences of civil society ‘pushing’ and ‘pulling’ at the policy system is that it ends up creating spaces and opportunities which champions of policy reform from within the system can use to mobilize new constituencies for change. While the dynamics of pushing, pulling and creating spaces tend to operate simultaneously, each deserves distinct attention, and examples of each are strewn across the accompanying six volumes of this series.

The story of the Pikine township on the outskirts of Dakar, Senegal, is discussed in later chapters but merits mention here as a story where a policy entrepreneur within government was able to use a space created by civil society to advance a vision of discursive policy planning in a manner that might otherwise not have been possible, and certainly not easy within conventional policy-making frameworks. In this case, the mayor of Pikine – a town of over one million inhabitants – was able to use the opportunity created by the activism of local, national and international NGOs around Agenda 21 to initiate a process of conversation and dialogue for envisioning the future of Pikine. The interesting difference between this example and the initiatives of civic entrepreneurs pulling sustainable development policy in Chile through the regional sustainability agendas is that, in this case, it was a policy entrepreneur

within government who was able to take the initiative by using a new policy space that had been created in the midst of NGOs' pushing and pulling the policy system around issues related to Agenda 21 (Cisse *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 315-320).

Another striking example comes from Hyderabad, Pakistan where Tasneem Siddiqui, a senior government servant, was able to adopt a revolutionary approach to urban slum development based on the success of the community development paradigms of Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan (see chapter 5) and the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) experiment in Karachi. Unlike the OPP in Karachi, which was entirely an NGO initiative, the *Khuda ki Basti* (God's Township) in Hyderabad was a government project. It became possible because the pioneering work of Dr. Khan and the OPP experiment had created a policy environment and policy space within which Tasneem Siddique, a government official, could adopt an innovative approach to participatory community development that was quite at odds with conventional governmental strategies of dealing with urban slums.

Just as the mayor of Pikine could make an argument for an inclusive town planning approach because civil society activism and activities around Agenda 21 had opened up a policy space where such an approach might be considered, Tasneem Siddique could take the bold move of adopting a community-driven participatory slum-development initiative in Khuda ki Basti because the success of the OPP experiment had demonstrated the efficacy of such an approach and thereby created a space within the policy system for it to be considered and even advanced by champions of reform. In each case, civil will was being invested in the creation of a new and bold policy space within the policy system rather than civic entrepreneurs becoming directly involved as pushers or pullers of sustainable development policy. It should, however, be noted that once policy entrepreneurs within the system use such space they are very likely to form deep and meaningful partnerships with civil society, which had helped create that space in the first place. This was certainly true for both Pikine and Khuda ki Basti, both of which then worked closely with civic entrepreneurs in those communities to build on their latent civil will.

Another story that demonstrates very similar dynamics of civic entrepreneurs creating new policy spaces and thereby enabling an enhanced expression of political will for sustainable development come from Bahía Blanca in Argentina (Vilar, 2002: Vol. 3: 111-116). Much like Pikine in Senegal, but a continent and an ocean away, Mayor Jaime Linares of Bahía Blanca county decided it was time to adopt a dramatically different approach to strategic planning. The county, located in the southwest portion of the Province of Buenos Aires, has a territory of 2,300 square kilometers and a population of just under 300,000 inhabitants. Although it has a rich history of political and social development and investments, one of Bahía Blanca's main challenges has been unemployment – at 13.4% in 1997 and rising to 17.1% in 2000 – and by this time the county had begun to face a serious economic downturn.



The county has a long history of civic entrepreneurship and a rich tradition of voluntary action. It was this tradition that laid down the foundations of a potential policy space that Mayor Linares was eventually able to use. Prior to being elected mayor, he had been the secretary of public works in 1985 and had worked on the elaboration of an Urban Plan for Bahía Blanca. This experience was instrumental in his personal education as a policy entrepreneur and made him realize the importance of participatory approaches to community development. It was also instrumental in his forging links with civil society entrepreneurs in Bahía Blanca. In 1997, during his second term as mayor, he convened a ‘citizen assembly’ to launch the strategic planning initiative. His message was quite clear: he was calling upon the citizens of Bahía Blanca to invest their civil will in this planning exercise in order to make up for an absence of political commitment for such processes from the provincial and national governments. The dynamic at work was also clear: here was a policy entrepreneur, convinced that the best interests of his community lay in adopting a new approach to policy planning, who decided to utilize a space created for such innovation by civic entrepreneurs instead of working through the normal channels of staid bureaucratic planning.

A manifestation of this dynamic of civil society providing new policy spaces for champions of policy reform is the fact that the municipality funded the initiative from its own resources but civic entrepreneurs invested their expertise and experience in the initiative by working with other experts from the municipality, academia and business. However, this is quite different from civic entrepreneurs being the prime pullers of policy because the key champion of reform in this case, quite clearly, was the mayor who was utilizing the new policy space provided by civil will to bolster the political commitment for this policy enterprise. The strategic plan has now been completed and implementation is beginning. Although it is still early to gauge the sustainable development impacts of its implementation, one of its key impacts is that the policy space for participatory sustainable development planning has been formally institutionalized in an advisory council and various technical groups that are inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral in structure. Such institutions can give civic entrepreneurs the potential to expand the policy spaces that they had first created through years of investment in demonstrating the efficacy of participatory and interdisciplinary approaches to sustainable development policy.

## Conclusion

In synthesizing the lessons from the accompanying regional volumes, this chapter has arrived at two key conclusions. First, despite the hectic, sometimes frantic, activity in terms of policy development at the international, national and local levels, policy reform has had very little impact on sustainable development in practice. However, it is striking that the stories that do suggest the positive potential of arriving at sustainable development through policy change, nearly all tend to have civic entrepreneurs playing a key role. The conclusion, then, seems to be that for the most part policy momentum,

per se, has not had a major impact on sustainable development practice; but wherever it has had impact, it has been motivated and energized by the civic entrepreneurs.

The dissonance between proclamation and implementation of sustainable development policy has been attributed to a lack of political will and commitment both at the global level and the national level. Indeed, it has been suggested by some that governments have embraced the rhetorical aspects of the sustainable development slogan simply because they lack the willingness to make the changes that would be required to implement it. This lack of will stems, most often, from the perceived costs that might be imposed on the status quo. Such analysis is quite commonplace, as is the mandatory question that comes immediately after it: “So, how *do* we create this mythical thing called ‘political will’?” The second, and more important, finding of this chapter is that it *is* possible to enhance political will and one potent way to do it is by investing in civil will which can then push, pull and create new spaces for the manifestation of enhanced political will for sustainable development.

In the next chapter we will focus on trends and developments in terms of how well, or poorly, market forces have worked towards the goal of sustainable development. Once again, we find that the key catalytic role is played by civic entrepreneurs who can push, pull and create new market spaces for business and sustainable development just as they do for sustainable development policy. Although not structured explicitly around them, these key dynamics of civil will are obvious in the arena of market reform as much as in policy reform.

# Chapter 3:

# Market Reform for

# Sustainable Development

*When people lost sight of the way to live  
Came codes of love and honesty ...  
When differences weakened family ties  
Came benevolent fathers and dutiful sons;  
And when lands were disrupted and misgoverned  
Came ministers commended as loyal.*

– Lao Tzu

In the last decade, there has been considerable development in thinking as well as practice about the role of the market in sustainable development. Prahalad and Hart (2002) have argued that *process* innovation – namely innovation in the way products are produced and marketed – is paving the way for orienting the market system towards the needs of the “bottom of the pyramid,” namely the poorest 40 per cent. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) has introduced the concept of eco-efficiency as a basis for guiding business decisions in the direction of sustainable development (Schmidheiny, 1992; Holliday and Pepper, n.d. DeSimone and Popoff, 1997). Ernst von Weizsäcker and his colleagues have argued that resource efficiency can be improved tenfold simply by using available technologies (Factor 10 Club, 1995), an idea that has been taken up by many different writers, including Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins (1999). The World Bank in its *World Development Report 1992* advanced the hypothesis of the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC), arguing that the very process of economic growth leads towards an improvement in environmental indicators after an initial period of deterioration. A similar argument had been advanced half a century earlier by the Nobel Laureate economist, Simon Kuznets, who had demonstrated on the basis of cross-country evidence that economic growth was associated with an initial worsening and a subsequent improvement in income distribution. In short, analysts and observers have tried to show that sustainable development can be achieved through normal business practices, available technology, and the conventional process of economic growth.

Such optimism is not new. Ever since Adam Smith, a fundamental tenet of economic theory is the power of the invisible hand of the market in meeting human needs. “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we can expect

our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest” (Smith, 1976 [1776]). The economic motive, like a river flowing downhill, will find its way towards its objective without any need for stimulus or command – unless impeded by ill-advised policies or institutional structures, for which the only solution is the removal of such obstacles.

## Internal Drivers of Market Reform

Since our interest is in the practice of sustainable development rather than its theory, this is not the place to get into an abstract discussion of the pros and cons of the market. With regard to the role of the market, the chapters in the accompanying volumes focus not on theoretical possibilities but on practical experience in their respective country or region over the past decade. The results can be summarized quite readily. Every chapter shows that, while there are areas of light, the general trend is towards increasing environmental degradation, marginalization of rural areas and communities, and even in an increase in social and economic inequities. However, consistent with the overall approach of this series, the authors concentrate on the positive experiences in order to identify a basis for hope for the future.

These positive experiences have taken a number of forms, including adoption of voluntary standards by leading businesses, the identification of win-win possibilities, often under the banner of eco-efficiency, the establishment of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to integrate efficiency and social concerns, the introduction of new and clean technologies, the emergence of environmental services to facilitate the improvements in products and processes, the increasingly positive role being played by some of the most progressive business associations, and the impact of a range of market-based incentives offered by governments. Leading examples of these experiences are described in the remaining sections of this chapter. However, the recurring concern by this group of practitioners is that “The progress among the firms described [here] is laudable, but it does not indicate a widespread departure from conventional, unsustainable patterns of (under) development (Vilar, 2002: Vol. 3: 69).” Furthermore, according to Ali Qadir (Vol. 4: 16), “Industry’s practices of sustainable production may thus be correlated with the presence of a regulatory environment, pressure from the civic sector and international trends, rather than an internal drive.”

Our research informs us that there *is* indeed an internal drive for improvement within the business sector, that it is driven by four motives, and that behind each of these motives is visible precisely what we have here called civil will. The four motives are:

**International pressure:** In virtually every country, there are indications that the overt adherence to environmental and social standards is concentrated either in the corporate sector, and especially among multinational corporations, or among the export industries. For example, Blanco *et al.*, (Vol. 3: 144) report that “The incorporation of sustainable development principles into business management was initially more a response to external requirements on exports than internal factors.”

Citing Espinoza and Pisani (2000), they continue, “contact by foreign companies with developed and demanding environmental regulation systems, along with the need for the large national exporters to assume a commitment with the environment that would allow them to compete in international markets, meant that from the end of the 1970s the large companies in Chile began to generate environmental management policies.” This response can be traced back to the role played by civil society groups in industrialized countries, which have invested in consumer pressure, policy advocacy, divestiture campaigns, and other standard elements of civil society actions (Najam, 1999b). This pressure has on the one hand led to the evolution of more effective legal restrictions and on the other hand to the adoption of voluntary standards by corporate groups to pre-empt future criticism (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

**Business Associations:** A second prominent feature is the highly constructive role played by some business associations (e.g., in the Central European countries, Argentina, Chile, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand), in raising awareness, developing codes of good practice, identifying win-win opportunities, and generally ensuring the feasibility and consistency of policy options. It needs to be emphasized here that these actions do not stem from a narrow interpretation of self-interest, but from an enlightened approach, which expands the range of self-interested actions and thus brings them closer to the collective interest (Hawken, 1994). A breed of entrepreneurs, who resemble not so much the traditional private investors as they do the civic entrepreneurs whose stories are chronicled in these volumes, lead these actions. They build the social capital of a society rather than the financial capital of the investor.

**Partnerships:** The primary mechanisms through which the civil sector has directly influenced business activities are advocacy campaigns on the one hand and public-private partnerships on the other. For example, practitioners from Argentina report that “A study of public-private partnerships in water provision in low-income areas of Buenos Aires indicates that partnerships should involve not only government and the private sector, but also other relevant groups. In this case, these included local residents and civil society groups (to assist with organizing residents, advocating for the project, and serving as a mediator throughout the duration of the project)” (Vilar, 2002: Vol. 3: 65-66).

**Regulatory Environment:** Finally, the market seems to have responded well to a number of market-based incentives, and generally to the overall regulatory environment created by the state. However, these structures are not as ubiquitous as might have been desirable. To quote Vilar again, “The participation of the state in defining the “rules of the game” is vital to ensuring that market forces work in favor of – not in opposition to – sustainable development. Overall, this guidance has not been present, and the market has not been effective in promoting sustainable development” (Vilar, 2002: Vol 3: 69). However, in case after case, we find that the effectiveness of market-based incentives, and the strength as well as the credibility of the regulatory environment depends crucially on the advocacy, support, and bridge-building activities of civic leaders. Absent such input, policy has often been ineffective, unpredictable, and prone to the influence of pressure groups.

What we deduce from the above is that the economic motive has certainly to be harnessed in support of the goal of sustainability and sustainable development, but almost invariably through an explicit or implicit partnership between the state, the market, and the citizen (see Najam, 1996). Ideally, the partnership involves the citizens of the country within which the economic activity is located, but there is considerable experience in which the citizens of other countries have played a positive role (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

## Limitations of Internal Drivers of Market Reform

The above should not be taken to mean that role of the corporate sector; especially the multinational corporate sector is viewed as being unambiguously supportive of sustainable development (see Glockman, 1995; Korten, 1995; Finger and Kilcoyne, 1997). Almojuela-Tolentine *et al.*, (Vol. 5: 24-25) note that multinational corporations are the main transmitters of environmentally unsound production systems and hazardous materials and products to the Third World, which includes most of Southeast Asia. They generate more than half of the greenhouse gasses emitted by the industrial sector in Southeast Asia, they control 80 per cent of land worldwide cultivated for export crops, and twenty firms account for 90 percent of pesticide sales. In fact 25 percent of pesticide exports from the United States in the late 1980s were chemicals banned or withdrawn in the US itself (Martin Khor 2001).

These caveats are ubiquitous. In Colombia, “the market has not yet shown itself capable of eliciting consistently ‘green’ practices on the part of most corporations. This is due to a variety of factors, among them: The regulatory and incentive structures within which companies operate are not always conducive to environmentally sound behavior... voluntary environmental standards (such as ISO 14000) have thus far not been adopted by the vast majority of firms” (Hurtado *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 243) In South Asia, “even larger firms or MNCs, however, have not filled the ‘sustainability space’ by providing environmental services for a profit (aside from small consultancy firms offering management advice and training)” (Haldar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 16). In fact, notwithstanding the important contribution of the global Mining, Minerals, and Sustainable Development Project, success has been slow. For example, in Zimbabwe, Riozim and LONRO have improved efforts to appropriately site mine dumps and control hazardous waste runoff into streams, but most other mining companies are reported to have continued to implement the most cost-effective and often environmentally damaging technologies (Mutepe *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 400).

Moreover, although in some countries (such as India) the top management of large indigenous firms has realized the fact of financial gains through internalizing good practices in the long run, this awareness is still fairly shallow. In Iran, for instance, “owners of private businesses are overwhelmingly ignorant of the environmental impact of their production processes and, even more importantly, of alternative, cleaner methods of production. In a telling case, one of the researchers of this report asked a very committed environmental activist to talk about the environmental conditions of

the printing house he privately owned and managed. He said that the premises were kept very clean. When the question was clarified he said that “no measures were taken for protecting the environment” (Farvar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 6: 90). In Kenya, similarly, “over the past 10 years, local companies have developed no new technologies. Nonexistent R&D departments, human capacity and poor access to science and technology and other critical market information fuel the poor state of innovation in the country’s business sector (Kitevu *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 62). Concerns have also surfaced that the improvements are only skin-deep, and that investments in environmental technologies, for instance, are vulnerable to a deteriorating economic climate.

There is also persistent unease about the small and medium enterprise sector. In Colombia, “as a result of financial or informational limits, small and medium-sized companies have often been unable to take advantage of ‘cleaner’ processes and technologies that reduce energy use and/or pollutants” (Hurtado *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 243); in Kenya, the small and medium enterprises lack the incentive to invest in modern technologies, and therefore “still operate obsolete equipment that is characterized by high resource conversion and energy-use in efficiencies leading to much pollution” (Kitevu *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 62); in India, the more than two million small and medium-scale units “lack awareness and access to technology and finance,” and “have been left out completely from the introduction of clean technology or corporate social responsibility,” because of which environmental compliance is only around 20-25 per cent (Halдар *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 207).

Yet, at least in one respect, the small and medium-scale private sector in developing countries has generated a significant sustainable development bonus: the informal sector’s contribution to waste recycling and management. In Bangladesh, the market mechanism has been allowing recycling of paper, glass and metals to the best of its technological ability, and of course, without any incentive (Ahmed *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 96). Ali Qadir’s (Qadir, 2002: Vol. 4: 16) description of this sector in Pakistan could apply generically to many developing countries even if the details differ from case to case: “Most urban centers in the country are home to a number of scavengers who pick up solid waste (including glass and plastic) and sell this to recycling plants and incinerators (such as those of brick kilns). In some cities, newspapers and used paper are routinely picked up by scavengers and sold to be processed for packaging material and used as cheap wrapping. By its very nature, however, such work is generally unorganized and does not collect a significant portion of the waste generated (most of which is taken to municipal dump sites and burnt).” For a variety of reasons this response has not been scaled up to a level where it could address the bulk of the problem; nor has it benefited from technological, financial, or human-resource inputs from the formal or corporate sector. As a result, it continues to offer meager benefits to workers while exposing them to health risks and persecution from state authorities. Indeed, in this case as well, the primary drive for the strengthening of the informal sector through formalization of rights and protection of interests has come from a number of non-government organizations.

The primary response of the formal sector to these concerns is visualized in the form of

the provision of environmental goods and services, and especially in the development of environmental technology. But this response is far from adequate. The demand for environmental technology develops when, because of regulatory requirements in foreign markets and/or consumer demands, environmentally sound processes and products become significant criteria for viability within the market. In some cases, this leads to the emergence of new companies dedicated to providing such technologies or services. In Colombia, for example, environmental investment has ranged between \$134 million and \$117 million, of which only 1-2 per cent is of local origin. The remaining component consists of imports, with over half coming from the United States. However, when compared to the \$34 billion of environmental investments that will be needed over the next decade, the current level of investment is clearly inadequate; it is also on a declining trend, because of the recent recession. Finally, because of the imported nature of the bulk of these investments, they are not affordable to the vast majority of the firms, especially in the small and medium scale sector (Hurtado *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3).

The situation in the rest of the region is not dissimilar. In El Salvador, the environmental technologies market was estimated at US\$180 million in 1999, and in Honduras, at US\$905 million for the decade of 1994-2005. The maximum demand is in the water and sewage sectors, solid waste hauling and disposal, and environmental consulting. In Panama, there is no domestic production of equipment for water provision or for wastewater treatment, so all such equipment must be imported, usually from the United States (Guzmán and Birch, 2002: Vol. 3: 333).

In the Baltic countries, the market for environmental technologies and services has grown steadily since 1990, leading to the dynamic development of local environmental businesses. Between 150 and 200 small and medium-sized enterprises are currently active in the environmental market, with the number growing continuously. The majority are service-oriented, young (over 70 percent were established after 1990), small in scale as well as employment, and privately owned (Jüssi *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 7: 14-1; Francoj and Duffy, 1998).

In sum, while there is some movement in the field of environmental technology, it is still small and uncertain. A major reason is the unpredictability of the long-term prospects of the industry. Predictability takes root only where civil society as well as government is fully in support of the policy framework.

## **Role of Civil Will in Market Reform**

In short, the glass is both half empty and half full; in fact, it could be said that the bottom half is empty and the top half is full! A major reason is the policy and intellectual environment within which market decisions are made. According to Borregard and Bustos *et al.*, (Vol. 3: 10), “the regional development model [in Latin America] is heavily growth-based, and...[public authorities] at the highest level have emphasized that economy comes first and environmental protection is second. With



the background of this model the private sector has been involved very much on the basis of specific, relatively isolated initiatives, instead of effectively internalizing environmental protection and social considerations into their daily business.”

In the view of the authors of this series of books, a major obstacle to an integrated approach to achievement of sustainable development objectives is that we continue to think of the market as a spontaneous domain of activity, driven by the inexorable force of the economic motive, which like a mighty river needs only the removal of policy or institutional obstacles to reach its destination. Our reading of the experience is very different from this ‘hydrological’ model of development. In our reading, the successful instances of the market response have been nurtured and developed in much the same manner that civic entrepreneurs have built new institutions, new practices, and new ways of solving problems. A properly functioning market in the context of sustainable development is as much the result of the actions of civic entrepreneurs as is a well-functioning community organization or a water users’ association or indeed a non-governmental organization. A properly functioning market is as much a component of social capital as is a church group or a consumer rights organization. It is not surprising, then, that the investment of this social capital in the form of civil will is as critical to the effectiveness of the market as it is to the arena of policy reform or civic action. Just as the previous chapter found that civic entrepreneurs can be key triggers of policy reform, so we find here that they can be equally instrumental in making markets work for, rather than against, sustainable development. In the following sub-sections we will review how these dynamics have worked in practice in terms of market reform for sustainable development.

**The Impact of Transition and Structural Adjustment:** This is a propitious moment to get into the discussion of transition and structural adjustment given the concerted shift towards market liberalization in transition economies as well as developing countries. While developing countries have not been exposed to as extreme a dislocation as the transition process in Central European republics, their experience of structural adjustment or economic liberalization is not too far removed. Argentina has gone through a transition process involving privatization, deflation, and trade liberalization (World Bank, 2000). Colombia has similarly undergone privatization and trade liberalization (Hurtado *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 25); Bangladesh has undergone a simultaneous process of economic and political liberalization, involving privatization on the one hand and a change from a military government to an elected one on the other (Ahmed *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 93). Pakistan and Senegal have instituted structural adjustment programs under the aegis of international financial institutions (Qadir, 2002: Vol. 4: 307; Cisse *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 301-302). Partly as a result of the Marrakech agreement and the establishment of the WTO, trade barriers have been dismantled in many developing countries; this has been accompanied throughout the developing world by a massive trend towards privatization, especially of energy, transport, telecommunications services, and in many instances of water and sanitation

services and the mining sector; and a revamping of financial sectors and especially stock markets. As a consequence of these trends, the private sector has become an increasingly important actor at all levels, and the influence of the international market in the form of external requirements has expanded.

Once again, these changes have generally been viewed from a very narrow perspective, a perspective that regards the liberalization of markets as an end in its own right. The perspective provided in these volumes is quite different; it considers the crucial element to be the role of the civic entrepreneurs – be they from the policy world, the business world, or the civil society – in making the reforms a positive force for sustainable development. In fact, as illustrated in Table 1 (from Jüssi *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 7: 14) on the pros and cons of the transition processes in Central European countries, the liberalization processes generally involve both synergies and conflicts with sustainable development.

**Table 1: Interactions Between the Process of Transition and Sustainable Development**

| Transition     | Synergies                                                                                                                                              | Opportunities                                                                                             | Threats                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| General        | Reforming social institutions to ensure a better future                                                                                                | Mobilizing social energy for reform                                                                       | Sweeping change potentially destabilizing the society; narrowing decision-making time horizons                                              |
| International  | Alignment with international sustainability objectives                                                                                                 | Opening up to international experience of sustainable development and international aid                   | Globalization may threaten traditional ways of life and local economies. Emerging nationalism may result in ethnic tensions and instability |
| Constitutional | Democracy and protection of minorities and other vulnerable groups                                                                                     | Decentralizing governance, making it more participatory and sensitive to environmental and social agendas | Potential political instability; disenfranchisement of certain social groups                                                                |
| Economic       | Decentralization of resource-allocation decisions; revitalizing economic growth; phasing-out environmentally and economically unsustainable industries | Developing local economies and encouraging independent economic initiative                                | Dependence on external markets; drive to overexploit natural resources; potential for impoverishment                                        |

Source: Jüssi *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 7: 14

More specifically, economic deregulation has had a profound impact on the environment. In many countries, trade liberalization was accompanied by increased exports, especially of products of highly polluting industries. On the other hand, it created linkages between national legislation and the more stringent environmental policies of trading partners. However, the former impact is generally seen as dominant. In Colombia, for example, between 1980 and 1995, exports of energy products multiplied by a factor of 35, and substantial increases were recorded in exports of chemical products and iron (Schaper, 1999); this meant a dramatic increase in several highly polluting industries – both extractive and manufacturing – particularly petroleum and coal (Hurtado *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 235). This effect has not, thus far, been adequately offset by the potentially positive environmental effects of trade liberalization, namely access to improved technologies, and the pressure from consumer demand for environmentally sound production processes.

**The Policy Environment and Market-Based Incentives:** Accompanying the adoption of voluntary standards, and in some cases formalizing the standards through explicit legislation, is the role of the policy environment in general and the institution of market-based incentives. The experience of these has been mixed. Although in some countries (e.g. Colombia) they have led to significant improvements in resource efficiencies, it has often been found that the implementation of such incentive systems requires a considerable amount of institutional learning, and this requires active collaboration between business associations, government agencies, and civil society groups.

Colombia has a longer history of employing market-based instruments than many other countries (Huber *et al.*, 1998). Charges and taxes on resource use were first introduced in 1974, while in 1982 and 1984 charges were levied on emissions of air pollutants and wastewater from commercial operations. In general, however, these mechanisms were rarely enforced and were not based on the actual environmental and social costs of the economic activities in question. The primary purpose was to generate resources for the environmental sector, rather than to alter patterns of resource use. As a result, they did little to promote the sustainable use of natural resources. More recently, however, an effort has been made to strengthen and rationalize economic instruments for environmental protection, and there is some evidence to suggest that the new measures can be effective. Between 1990 and 1993 a regional environmental protection agency more than tripled water-use charges and this resulted in a 50 per cent reduction in water consumption. In another case, the country's largest iron and steel plant implemented pollution controls to avoid the charges that would have been imposed under a pollution tax – in spite of the eventual failure to effectively impose the tax as a result of legal disputes (Huber *et al.*, 1998).

Our collaborators from Colombia (Hurtado *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 239) report that, similarly, water pollution charges were imposed on biological oxygen demand (BOD) and total suspended solids (TSS) in 1997 by Decree 901. This policy

established five-year water pollution reduction targets, which had earlier been negotiated by industries, municipalities, and communities. The pollution charges were programmed to increase steadily until the targets were met. The initial launch of the program in the area of the Rio Negro watershed was extremely successful, with a 28-percent drop in BOD pollution during the first six months; this constituted nearly half of the targeted reductions for the entire five-year time period. Since then, water pollution has continued to drop in this region, and by 2001 the program had been implemented by twelve other regional authorities (World Bank NIPR, 1998; ACEE, 2001).



**Recycling works. When a clean environment becomes a good business**

Source: Near East Foundation

In Colombia, it took between fifteen and twenty years before the market-based policies could become effective. In other countries, because of the short time elapsed since the introduction of such measures, the success has been somewhat desultory. In Argentina, market-based instruments have met with limited success, despite their antiquity. An industrial effluent discharge fee was introduced in 1980, but through the following decade the fees were rarely applied. Eventually, it was declared unconstitutional in a case brought by environmental groups who claimed that the system permitted industries to pollute beyond legal limits. The fee system was modified in 1989, but the legal issues have yet to be resolved (UNEP/GEO Team, 1999; Huber *et al.*, 1998).

In Chile as well, economic instruments appear to be a reflection of the half-hearted policy approach of the government to environmental management. Even though a range of economic instruments have been analysed by governmental agencies as

well as academics, the authorities have been resistant to go ahead with the introduction. In fact, not a single economic instrument has been introduced in recent years, and a general institutional and legal framework for the elaboration and introduction of these instruments is still lacking. Some earlier economic instruments – e.g. transferable quotas (ITQ) for fishing, deposit refund schemes for bottles, the ozone label, financial incentives for clean technology investments – are all rather small in scope. The ITQ system affects only one percent of all fish landings; the ozone label, introduced in 1996, has been acquired only by one company; and the emission-compensation system applies exclusively to new fixed sources in the area of Santiago. The deposit-refund system for bottles is a private system (Borregaard and Leal, 2000).

**Table 2: Projects Implemented by Industry to Reduce Environmental Damage in Zimbabwe**

| Project Title                                            | Sector/s                                                                                                                                    | Enterprises covered | Project Focus                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| UNIDO CPC(1994)                                          | Food processing ,<br>wood processing ,<br>glass manufacturing,<br>foundries, beverages ,<br>soap manufacturing<br>etc                       | 19                  | Cleaner production<br>capacity-building,<br>awareness-raising,<br>information-<br>dissemination, policy<br>dialogue, in-plant<br>demonstration |
| UNIDO/Leather<br>Institute of<br>Zimbabwe                | Leather tanning                                                                                                                             | 4                   | Waste management<br>(operation and<br>monitoring of tannery<br>effluent)                                                                       |
| Clean, Green and<br>profitable (SIDA)                    | Leather                                                                                                                                     | 4                   | Waste management                                                                                                                               |
| ILO/<br>NORAD/EMCOZ                                      | Foundries, chemical,<br>wood processing                                                                                                     | 3                   | Cleaner production                                                                                                                             |
| GTZ/CZI<br>Environmental cost<br>management              | Food processing<br>Paper packaging ,<br>edible oils                                                                                         | 1                   | Environmental costing                                                                                                                          |
| DANIDA Cleaner<br>Production<br>Technology               | Foundry,<br>electroplating, leather<br>tanning, mining<br>(smelting and refining)<br>textiles, battery<br>manufacturing,<br>pharmaceuticals | 29                  | Cleaner production<br>technologies                                                                                                             |
| SANTREN/DANIDA                                           | Food processing                                                                                                                             | 2                   | Capacity-building at<br>tertiary institution level                                                                                             |
| UNEP Strategies<br>and Mechanisms for<br>CPT Investments | Financing<br>implementation                                                                                                                 | 10                  | Preparation of cleaner<br>production investment<br>proposals                                                                                   |

Source: Mutepfa *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 402

An important contribution in this area is by bilateral and multi-lateral donors, who have funded or supported the introduction of such schemes, and provided significant technical assistance and professional support. For example, Table 2 shows that an entire range of instruments has been introduced in Zimbabwe with the active involvement of external donors. This also creates problems of sustainability, as the withdrawal of donor support often means the collapse of the new system.

**Public-Private Partnerships:** As mentioned, the key to solution of the tension between the positive and negative impacts of market liberalization is the role of the civil society. This role has manifested itself in many different ways. The most obvious of these is in the forging of formal partnerships between the government, civil society, and for-profit activities: the public-private partnership. The 1990s has seen many examples of such partnerships, especially in Latin America. Overall, public-private partnerships have a role to play in the provision of services in low-income areas, but it should not be concluded that this arrangement is a panacea: in themselves, public-private partnerships neither de-politicize nor guarantee sustainable provision of services. Careful planning and ongoing monitoring and negotiation are necessary to ensure that the poor receive services in an affordable way.

Some of the earliest examples were in Argentina, where the government designed and implemented reforms in water regulation that made public-private partnerships in this sector possible. In Buenos Aires, funding provided by the International Finance Corporation, the European Investment Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank was essential, and this funding would have been difficult to arrange without the high creditworthiness of the private sector partner, Aguas Argentinas; it was much better than that of the Argentine state. Benefits to Aguas Argentinas, a private company involved in the Buenos Aires concessions, were often indirect, in the form of improved public relations and reduced illegal water connections (and the associated water losses and contamination). The residents, of course, benefited from the provision of services not previously available, while the government benefited from the greater authority and local support gained at lower costs (Leclerc *et al.*, 2001; Schusterman *et al.*, 2002; Vilar, 2002: Vol. 3: 65-66).

Another source of pressure for the forging of partnerships comes from communities. An increasing number of communities expect companies not only to fulfill their obligation to provide employment, but also to get involved in local development. In Chile, for example, many companies have been confronted by local communities when installing large-investment projects. The main lesson learned by those involved in these conflicts is the need to incorporate citizen participation at the earliest stages of the projects' life cycles and to show transparency in private management. The National Environmental Commission (CONAMA) is encouraging the business sector to achieve this on a voluntary basis (Blanco *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 146).

In other words, the outcomes of public-private partnerships have been mixed. Success depends critically on the commitment of the local government to the partnership as well as its sensitivity to the needs of the local environment and local actors. Finally, it is absolutely vital that partnerships are structured in such a way that low-income segments of the population benefit from the results. The initial Buenos Aires concession, for example, did not accomplish this – the tariff structure did not facilitate access by the poor to water services. Renegotiation of the arrangement was carried out in 1999 to remedy this situation, with some success. Tax exemptions for construction of new lines enabled the company to lower its connection fees, while the participation of local communities in the negotiation process helped ensure that the arrangements would actually benefit the beneficiaries.

**Business Associations:** The idea of partnership is a brilliant innovation, meeting as it does the needs of efficiency, equity, participation, protection of rights, and cost-recovery. It turns out that the strongest champions of partnerships are the visionary business leaders and business associations. At the global level, a leading role has been played by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), which describes itself as “a coalition of 150 international companies united by a shared commitment to sustainable development via the three pillars of economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity.” It started with an ad hoc meeting of the chief executives of 48 business enterprises in Antwerp in April 1991, at the invitation of Swiss businessman Stephan Schmidheiny, who had been named by UNCED Secretary General Maurice Strong as his principal advisor on business and industry. Schmidheiny’s express intention in convening the group, then called the Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) was simply to present the ‘business case’ at UNCED in June 1992. (See Najam, 1999a).

Over the years, the WBCSD have produced an impressive range of publications, participated actively in the entire gamut of inter-governmental negotiations and processes pertaining to sustainable development, directly initiated or supported a wide array of activities in different production sectors (paper, mining and minerals, energy, climate change, and fresh water), and established formal partnerships or informal agreements with a large variety of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations – including UNEP, UNDP, UNCTAD, the UN Global Compact Initiative, IUCN, IIED, CERES, and Earthwatch. However, their most impressive contribution appears to be a conceptual one, namely, the idea that sustainable development is not only ‘good for business’ but also ‘good business’ (Schmidheiny, 1992). The main conceptual tool used by the WBCSD in this regard is the showcasing of success stories in achieving sustainable development goals by business groups. On the one hand, this creates a broader social legitimacy for business – by putting the best foot forward as it were and thus counteracting the activism of leading NGOs, which, as a mirror image, always highlighted the worst cases of business excess (Najam, 1999a). On the

other hand, the same success stories demonstrate to business groups that the pursuit of sustainable development can enhance rather than detract from overall profitability. Put simplistically, the external message of the WBCSD to civil society is that ‘things don’t have to be different’, while the internal message to the business community is ‘we need to do things differently.’

As a result of this complex message, WBCSD has helped move the leading members of the global corporate community away from a black-and-white approach to policy-making. While it expresses a preference for voluntary approaches or market-based incentives, it concedes that there are circumstances in which regulatory and command-and-control approaches might be the only effective options. It has adopted the participatory approach advocated by leading civil society groups. It has emphasized disclosure and transparency in business practices, and has sought to promote actions that conserve resources as well as cater to equity. In other words, its role as an advocate of business has been subsumed into that of an advocate for sustainable development (DeSimone and Popoff, 1997).

In many countries, the commitment of leading business groups to sustainable development has explicitly been under the aegis of the WBCSD, and others have been inspired by this leadership. National councils of the WBCSD were established in several countries in the Southeast Asian region including Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. In the Philippines, for example, this process has led to the formulation of the Philippine Business Charter and the Business Agenda for the Philippine Agenda 21 (Almojuela-Tolentino *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 5: 22-23) In Thailand, a group of young businessmen established the Thai Business Council for Sustainable Development (TBCSD) in 1993, a non-profit organization to promote sustainable development through business leadership (de la Rosa, 2002: Vol. 5: 240).

Perhaps the most active regional chapter of the WBCSD is in Latin America. Since 1992, many Latin American countries have established this type of council or organization (ECLAC 2001). The Argentinean Council, the Consejo Empresario para el Desarrollo Sostenible (CEADS) founded in 1991, has a membership of 36 of the largest companies. These big firms have recognized not only that they could adapt to new international standards, but also that enhancement of environmental performance could reduce operation costs. They introduced cleaner technologies to reduce emissions and the generation of wastes, and began to comply with ISO standards of quality and environmental management. Many of these firms have foundations that promote environmental education and have community programs on forestation, green areas, habitat protection, and neighborhood improvement. Notwithstanding this enlightened leadership (as well as the availability of technical assistance), such efforts are not representative of the majority of firms in Argentina, and for example, the environmental and economic advantages of rational of energy use are exploited far too infrequently (Vilar, 2002: Vol. 3: 66-67).



In Zimbabwe, the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industry (CZI) has promoted an environmental code of ethics in industry, with incentives for better environment management and dialogue with the government on standards and legal requirements. The CZI has worked with a local NGO, Environment 2000 to promote eco-labeling of products through a voluntary scheme in which companies can register for the inspection of the production and packing of goods after which a label of good environmental performance is assigned. A separate initiative is the Environmental Forum of Zimbabwe (EFZ) — a partner of the WBCSD — which came into being in 1992 and developed a ten-point code of conduct as a guiding framework for member companies that promotes the integration of development with environment. Its short-term goals include incorporating WBCSD's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles into business strategies among member industries. Since 1993, its membership has increased from 25 to 110, and some member companies have developed their own environment policies (Mutepefa *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 402-403).

In our reckoning, these actions are the result of leadership provided at global as well as national levels, leadership that has been able to show how things could be done differently, and thus represents what we call here civil will. In some countries, the role of civil will has been even more explicit. In India, for example, the most progressive industrial association, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has done its pioneering work in promoting the concepts of environment-management systems and environmental performance rating in collaboration with one of the most vocal advocates of civil society perspectives, the Centre for Science and Environment, founded by the late Anil Agarwal, who is one of the champions of sustainable development to whom this series of volumes is dedicated. In fact, here and elsewhere, business associations have often acted as bridges to foster partnerships amongst policy makers, industries, financial institutes and public.

This is also evident from the Pakistan experience, in which the program on Technology Transfer for Sustainable Industrial Development (TTSID) was introduced by a leading NGO, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). The program facilitated a dialogue between industry representatives (primarily through the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industries – FPCCI), and government (primarily through the environmental protection agencies). It led to the formulation of specific provisions in the national legislation relating to pollution taxes and national environmental quality standards (NEQS). The legislation came after a resolution by the general body of the FPCCI to commit industry to pay a pollution charge on effluents and emissions above the NEQS. The charge has been calibrated to amount to more than the clean-up cost. Three aspects of this process are striking: First, it relies on market incentives. The pollution charge was determined entirely by industry representatives themselves in internal negotiations in a unique example of pro-active steps for sustainable industrial development. Second, it involved extensive and regular dialogues

between all stakeholders (Qadir, 2002: Vol. 4: 280-281). Third, the agreement has opened up a space for visionary leaders of industry to initiate other actions. An important initiative in this regard was the Environment Technology Program for Industry (ETPI), a joint project of the FPCCI and the Government of Netherlands to promote the use of safe technologies and compliance with ISO 14000 and NEQS. By creating new policy spaces, civic entrepreneurs leading these programs have provided the impetus for domestic business enterprises that are now working in the area of promoting environmental technologies.

In countries where the leadership lacks vision, the existence of business associations has not been sufficient for the achievement of sustainable development objectives. In Nigeria, for example, the institutional space is crowded with professional associations as well as business associations, but there is little evidence of sustainability initiatives. The largest and most influential business association in Nigeria, the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (NACCIMA), an umbrella organization of 65 organizational chamber members, business associations, and trade and professional groups, promotes the interests of business through advocacy on a range of issues. However, there is little visible activity in the domain of sustainable development. (Okali, 2002: Vol. 3: 208).

**Voluntary Standards:** One of the consistent planks of visionary business leaders and progressive business associations is the preference for voluntary standards. While the idea is more than a century old, with roots in the Owenite program for voluntary business commitment to good conduct in 19<sup>th</sup> century England, it has acquired salience in the era of globalization.

A significant step in this development is the challenge posed to business by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in his January 31, 1999, address to the World Economic Forum at Davos Switzerland. Annan invited the business community to join in a Global Compact by agreeing to uphold nine founding principles in three broad areas: the environment, human rights, and labor standards — as exemplified by three leading international organizations: UNEP, UNCHR, and the ILO. The Global Compact Initiative (GCI) has been welcomed by some of the leading business associations, including the WBCSD as well as the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), trade union federations (ICFTU) and large NGOs.

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is another important contribution to the translation of corporate responsibility into action. Starting from the idea of principles of conduct, GRI has focused on disclosure and standardized reporting. The idea is that for corporate responsibility to become meaningful not only is there a need for systematic and sustained disclosure of relevant actions, there is also a need for bringing order into claims of good conduct. GRI has therefore worked to produce agreed principles of disclosure. These can be used in consonance with any set of guidelines or codes of conduct, and are designed to be

user-friendly in order to enable civil society, governments or business associations to compare different reports easily.

Perhaps because of the influence of the GCI and the GRI, the concept of corporate social responsibility became popular only at the very end of the 1990s. Different business groups, associations, and even companies and sectors have developed rather different approaches for the idea of assuming a greater responsibility towards the local community, the environment, their workers, as well as social issues. Whereas philanthropy towards these issues has existed for decades and direct donations have been common, in recent years new forms of partnership evolved between the companies and actors from civil society as well as government (Borregaard and Czischke, 2001). In Chile, recently created organizations (such as Acción Empresarial and PROHUMANA) are dedicated to this objective, and 160 companies have formally ratified a charter, which includes: i) giving environmental issues maximum importance in the company; ii) developing processes that involve the least possible energy consumption; iii) developing recyclable products; iv) demanding environmentally friendly and recyclable products from suppliers; v) educating consumers on how to use products and what happens to packaging; and vi) cooperating with the authorities to develop adequate environmental regulations, amongst other things (Blanco *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 145).

Voluntary standards are a potential source of encouragement for environmentally sustainable behavior on the part of firms. However, their adoption is not as widespread as might be desired. Even where standards have been adopted, companies often approached community relations or environmental protection with little systematicity and many have not kept track of their initiatives on a permanent basis. Only recently has civil society started to analyze the performance and impacts of this part of company activities. It is difficult to assess the impact of the commitments where the relevant counterpart at state level or within civil society is lacking. In general, the most effective commitments are those in which civil society counterparts, either in the country of production or in the importing country, are present and effectual. This explains why such initiatives are restricted to large-scale, internationally oriented companies. Some key trends that are emerging include:

Multi-national companies have often adopted the rules of their home countries, which normally involve stricter environmental and social regulations. In some cases, they have also made their subsidiaries or related companies up and down the supply chain follow those same rules.

Large-scale national industries, particularly those geared towards exports, are now improving their businesses as pre-requisites for ISO 9000 or 14000 certification, which is becoming a necessity for the export market.

Regardless of certification requirements, exporting industries have increasingly

responded to a discerning export market. Consumers in industrialized countries are more conscious of social and environmental standards of production than before.

Consumers as well as residents of areas plagued by industrial pollution are being mobilized by civil society and local community-awareness campaigns to demand cleaning-up processes.

In all of these factors, large-scale operations are an important commonality. Small and medium-scale enterprises are generally not as affected by external factors as are large industries or multi-nationals. The challenge to engage smaller firms in the Sustainable Development agenda is waiting to be addressed. More importantly, the orientation of most firms that adopt voluntary standards is towards the values and concerns of consumers and investors in industrialized countries. These ‘global’ standards are also the cutting edge of the GCI and GRI as well as the founding vision of the WBCSD. They have generally not been as concerned with what may be called local or livelihood standards (Banuri and Spanger-Siegfried, 2000).

## Conclusion

In a highly influential study, Prahalad and Hart (2002) argue that the corporate world, which until now has catered mainly to the top five percent of the income bracket, can equally produce goods and services for the ‘bottom of the pyramid,’ the poorest forty percent. To this end, they cite several examples of process innovations by corporate entities, which enabled them to cater to the poor. However, a closer look at the stories reveals that the successes are attributable in large part to the civil will exhibited by visionary business leaders rather than to the profit motive pursuing its inexorable course. These are not obscure stories. The business arena today celebrates several individuals – Stephan Schmidheiny, Maurice Strong, Lord Holme of Cheltenham, Syed Babar Ali or Rattan Tata, to name just a few – who have provided new visions of how to conduct business. Unlike the fabled entrepreneurship of the robber barons, their actions were intended to identify alternative modes of functioning – as is the contribution of civic entrepreneurs.

This chapter has sought to make two separate but closely related points. First, that the successful instances of market performance in the context of sustainable development have been driven, in one way or another, by the pressure or the example of civic entrepreneurs. Second, that in the term civic entrepreneurs, we include those visionary business leaders who create new agendas, new institutions, new codes of good practice, and new ways for the business community to act collectively to discharge its social obligation.

In much the same manner as we have argued in the case of policy reform (Chapter 2), civil will influences market reform in three different ways. First, it **pushes** economic agents through agitation, advocacy, and awareness-raising; the work of the

Center for Science and Environment in India under the dynamic leadership of the late Anil Agarwal, the Third World Network led by Martin Khor, Greenpeace, Ralph Nader, Human Rights Watch, and many local groups fall into this category. Second, it ***pulls*** economic activity by providing examples of how things may be done differently; this category includes civil society groups as well as businesses. The participatory approaches introduced by Akhter Hameed Khan or Shoaib Sultan Khan, the micro-credit approach refined by Muhammad Yunus, the technological innovations of Ashok Khosla, the partnership systems of Mechai Viravaidya, are becoming increasingly popular in the business world. Third, it ***creates spaces for champions of reform*** so that they can assume salience and leadership, and thus create constituencies of change, which cannot be mobilized on their own. In the business world, such initiatives have come from business leaders and associations, but also from such innovators and



# Chapter 4:

# Recognizing Sustainable Development

*There is nothing worse than a sharp image  
of a fuzzy concept.*

– Ansel Adams

Within the literature on sustainable development, an earlier passion for trying to define the term as precisely as possible has been replaced more recently by a newfound fascination with trying to ‘measure’ it (Lele, 1991; Munasinghe and Shearer, 1995; Najam, 1997; Prescott-Allen, 2001). Indeed, this interest is shared by and, in some way, motivated by intergovernmental processes (for example, the Commission on Sustainable Development) that have made the monitoring of sustainable development, and therefore its measurement, a particular priority. Monitoring progress towards sustainable developing *is* a good idea. Measuring it would also be a good idea if it could be done. Unfortunately, it is generally difficult to measure things that have not yet been defined, particularly if we seek precise and quantifiable measures.

There is, in addition, a deeper problem with many attempts to ‘measure’ sustainable development in that, in the urge to quantify, the concept is reduced to something less than its essence. As the previous two chapters have shown, seeking sustainable development only, or primarily, through the lens of policy reform or market forces provides an incomplete, rather than an incorrect, picture of the reality on the ground. This set of volumes seeks to add to the sustainable development mosaic by starting from the experience of civil society organizations. Each of the three approaches to change – policy reform, market forces, and civil will – provides a different point of entry into sustainable development practice.

The core structure of the approaches, and their differences, can be understood by using the analogy of the house, the river, and the tree. The house, much like policy reform, is best built using a carefully detailed and precisely executed blueprint. The Policy Reform approach, described earlier, rests upon the metaphor of a house, the final design of which is available – generally in the form of the familiar triangulation of ecological, economic and social domains (Banuri *et al.*, 1994; Munasinghe, 2000) – and which is gradually being approximated by a society through the operation of government policy. The measurement approach makes most sense in this instance since it brings together

policy instruments and clearly defined objectives. An alternative approach that builds on the forces of the market is also described earlier. Its internal logic can be best understood by using the metaphor of a river. The river is governed by the gradient of the terrain and, similar to market forces, will find its own way, except where it is dammed or otherwise obstructed by policy or institutional obstacles. In this approach, the purpose of policy is to remove any such obstacles in order for market forces – the metaphorical river – to operate more freely. In this case, measurement is unrelated to policy instruments directly; it is simply a means of keeping score as it were.

The third approach, described in this chapter, builds on the metaphor of the tree. The tree does not grow mechanically or precisely as does the house; nor does it follow the force of a single undeniable logic, as does the river. Rather, it grows organically, in fine balance with a multitude of stimuli in its environment. It spreads its shade and digs its roots in harmony with its surroundings, simultaneously seeking sustenance from and providing nourishment to its particular habitat while often managing to spread its seeds far and wide. The experience of civil society suggests that the practice of sustainable development also starts with small seeds, which, given patience, a nurturing environment, a clear vision, and adequate support, transform themselves into majestic trees. Here, the goal of policy is to recognize the seeds that will flower, provide a nurturing environment, mobilize support, and above all, enable the trees to reproduce themselves in other places and contexts. The process of growth of a tree is very different from the process by which a house is erected or the process by which a river finds its path of least resistance. Importantly, it is a process that defies simple measurement. The integrity of this process comes not from the precision of the blueprint or the inviolability of the gradient; it comes, instead, from the logic of organic growth, a logic that is spread across an indeterminate set of paths that are everywhere present but defy precise prediction.

In other words, the notion of sustainable development defies precise measurement for the same reason that it defies precise definition. Those who approach the issue from the perspective of an ultimate output and view sustainable development as a ‘destination’ tend to focus only on the pressures on the system and its state. Those who approach it from the perspective of process tend to focus on the policy response to these pressures; most often the non-policy and non-market response from civil society actors is not included simply because it is difficult to include. Indeed, even where it is included, it is conceived merely as the ‘support’ by civil society actions to government policies. Most efforts to measure sustainable development, therefore, miss out on what are perhaps the most critical ingredients in this complex recipe.

The interest of this particular set of volumes, therefore, is not in *measuring* sustainable development, but in *recognizing* sustainable development – more concretely, recognizing processes and actions that have the potential to lead to sustainable development. The key question put to the authors of country and sub-regional chapters – as well as to those who helped enrich these chapters through various forms of consultation – is how to identify qualities that characterize sustainable development: how to know which tree will



blossom. Each chapter in the six volumes that accompany this book seeks to provide explicit responses to this question; but implicit answers are strewn throughout in the choice of what our authors consider to be examples of sustainable development.

An interesting picture begins to emerge as one puts these responses together. What becomes apparent is a small set of shared ‘identification marks’ that are present in all or most of the examples. Indeed, the ubiquity of these elements is rather remarkable. In a process that rather resembles putting together a police sketch of a culprit – one that many have seen but none can identify precisely – we assemble here a composite sketch of what sustainable development looks like in practice.

This sketch can be described through the idea of ‘rootedness’ in the local context – a tree will blossom if it is rooted in the soil – and, specifically, in at least seven dimensions of the local context. These are the key ‘identifying marks’ one would look for as one sets out to recognize sustainable developments in practice:

- Community
- Sustainable livelihoods
- Wise use of resources
- Ecological integrity
- Adaptability
- Durability
- Connectedness

Each of these describes a different dimension of rootedness. The tree of sustainable development will bear fruit if it is rooted in the practices and perspectives of communities; if it enhances the coping and adaptive strategies of these communities; if it uses the available resources (metaphorically sunlight, water, and bio-matter) wisely and efficiently; if it rests upon the integrity of the ecosystem in which it is being planted; if it can adjust its growth as conditions change; if it can weather extremes; and if it develops mechanisms for cross-fertilization and exchange with other processes. Each of these is discussed below on the basis of examples from the accompanying volumes.

## Community

The village of Bhaonta-Kolyala, along the Arvari River in Western India, and its surrounding area experienced a period of severe drought in the 1980s, which led to significant urban migration and deepening poverty. In India, a country particularly hard hit by drought, the impacts on human water supply, crops and ecosystems have been compounded by growing human pressures and have become an increasingly urgent problem. In response, the villagers of Bhaonta-Kolyala turned to what were essentially their only resources – local materials and traditional knowledge – to revive a largely retired system of community water harvesting. The community built a system of small,

earthen dams known as *johads* along the Arvari River and its tributaries – a riparian system which had devolved under human extraction from a perennial river to a *nullah*, or riverbed. With the completion of the first series of *johads*, neighboring villages along the Arvari followed suit and began building as well. The river responded by flowing an additional month each successive year. Hydrological surveys estimate that three percent of the area's annual rainfall is now captured by the system of *johads*, which has resulted in a twenty percent increase in groundwater recharge – enough to start the Arvari flowing once more. Wildlife has begun returning to the watershed. The process of recovery of a badly damaged system is now underway.

Today, the seventy villages that inhabit the 45-kilometer Arvari watershed have installed over two hundred water harvesting structures – entirely independent of government guidance or financial support. In dry years, the Arvari's water is low, but there is enough for consumption – both for households and irrigation – in each of the Arvari watershed communities. To ensure sound future management, the villages of the watershed have established the 'Arvari River Parliament' for decision-making and dispute resolution. Throughout drought-prone regions of India, particularly the state of Rajasthan, cases of community water harvesting projects are beginning to spring forth. These are early seeds of hope, and though much has still to be done, the lesson from Bhaonta-Kolyala is indeed one of a 'great transition' (Haldar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 248-252).

The example of the Bhaonta-Kolyala community, organized as part of the initiative of the Tarun Bhagat Sangh (TBS), a local voluntary agency, brings out many lessons of relevance to sustainable development. However, its central lesson is one that is common to virtually every example of sustainable development, namely, the rootedness of the response in the resources and the priorities of the community itself. Indeed, this is one of the most prominent and prevalent identification marks of sustainable development. Whether it is slum development in metropolitan Pakistan (Qadir, 2002: Vol. 4: 314-319), water harvesting in small-town India (Haldar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 248-252), the management of rain forests in Nigeria (Okali, 2002: Vol. 2: 228-230), barter networks in Argentina (Vilar, 2002: Vol. 3: 103-108), or the adoption of clean production processes in Chile (Blanco *et al.*, Vol. 3: 178-184), the most robust indicator of sustainable development is the centrality of the community in the plans and conduct of the actors. Shoaib Sultan Khan, one of the pioneers of sustainable development and poverty eradication in South Asia, expresses the thought very well, "When we focus our efforts on poverty alone, we do not get results; we get results only when we focus on the community."

The emphasis on community-centric and participatory approaches is part of the conventional wisdom of sustainable development (Chambers, 1997; Korten, 1990). The examples that have been brought up by practitioners from across the world all validate this wisdom. Initiatives that emerge from the community and build on local traditions and local wisdom trigger a sense of ownership and pride that is often absent from projects designed and imposed from the outside. Actions that focus on the community, actions that are aimed at building social capital rather than physical capital, help impel society towards sustainable

development. Not only do such actions involve communities in implementation or design, but also, and more importantly, they help *build* communities by empowering them to make collective decisions in general. As is demonstrated by the experience of ‘water parliaments’ in India, rootedness in tradition provides the community with a sense of empowerment, which can sustain the effort long after external interest and/or resources have dried up. Community rootedness helps not only to ease the process of implementation but, far more importantly, makes the process of implementation sustainable and self-sustaining.

The point is that to be sustainable and sustained the ‘development’ in sustainable development has to be ‘contextual’ development: development rooted in a context. From the perspectives of the state or the market, communities are merely sub-components that add up to create states or markets; local impacts on communities are merely derivative of the more significant impact on national or economic aggregates. However, from the perspective of civil society organizations that work in such communities, it is the local impact that determines whether an initiative will lead to sustainable development. Consider the Ekuri initiative in Nigeria (Okali, 2002: Vol. 2: 220-222). This rain forest management initiative is a success story of sustainable development, not just because the forest is better off today – which it is, and without which the initiative would not be deemed a success – but far more importantly because, as a result of the initiative, the communities that live in and on the forest have begun to view their own betterment in the betterment of the forest. From an output-centered perspective, an initiative that benefited the forest without helping build the forest community would still be deemed a successful example of sustainable development, but from a great transitions perspective, it most certainly would not.



**Sustainable development must be rooted in the priorities  
of the community itself**

Source: NRSP-P

Community rootedness is important for another reason as well. Sustainable development is by nature inter-disciplinary; it cuts across issue boundaries – and so does community knowledge. By contrast, expert knowledge is organized around ever-narrower specialties. To again use the example of water harvesting in India, the residents of the Arvari watershed do not perceive the issue of water management purely in terms of hydrology and agronomy; rather, for them, it also involves much more intricate issues of distribution and justice. The ‘great transition’ in Arvari relates less to ‘integrated scientific assessment’ and much more to the creation of a new instrument of deliberative and participatory democracy – systems that can enable communities not only to use traditional know-how more effectively, but also to use it in conjunction with scientific knowledge. The key innovation is the joint resolution of issues of social justice with efficient practice, rather than an exclusive adoption of scientific methods or resolution of scientific disputes.

Marglin (1990) makes a seminal distinction between two types of knowledge: *episteme*, which is cerebral, axiomatic, and de-contextualized; and *techne*, which is embedded in the cultural and physical make-up of communities; it is tacit knowledge, pertains to practice and context, and is often not transmittable except through apprenticeship and the training of the body. The idea of community rootedness emphasizes the *techne* of sustainable development – how it is done, how it is put together, how it brings people together, and how all this sustains and nurtures the very intervention that starts it.

This brings out another important wrinkle in the concept of community rootedness. The common use of the word ‘community’ implies a village or small town, in which people live in direct face-to-face contact with each other. However, after Benedict Anderson (1983), the term has begun to be used in a broader sense, to include such ‘imaginary’ communities as nations or ethnicities. Apffel-Marglin and Marglin (1990) use the concept of ‘communities of knowledge’ to argue that all knowledge is produced in communities – whether they are scientific communities or living communities. Earlier, Hannah Arendt (1964) had conceptualized ‘communities of judgment.’ According to her analysis, it is only through judgment that we create communities; and that the refusal to judge is a root of the evil of the modern period. The refusal to judge, in Arendt’s terms, means not only stepping out of a community but actually destroying a community.

These broader conceptions of the word community are relevant to the practice of sustainable development. They bring out the fact that all successful sustainable development initiatives – whether they pertain to conserving resources or building livelihoods in a village, or to national policy advocacy, or public interest research, or the designing or development of codes of conduct or standards – are aimed at building communities. It is a fruit that comes from the tree of life, not from the tree of knowledge. In recent years, sociologists have used the term ‘social capital’ to capture the essence of activities that seek to build communities.

Sustainable development is not about making tradeoffs between environment and development; it is about seeking synergies between the two. Sustainable development is not about solving a single problem; it is about developing the capacity to solve a succession of problems. This is impossible unless the goal of building a community is placed at the center, viewed as a necessary condition rather than an ancillary benefit of sustainable development. The community's interests and involvement, therefore, are not just important because they make implementation easier; they are important because the building of communities is, in and of itself, a measure of sustainable development, a key identifying mark.

## Sustainable Livelihoods

In January 1986, a small group of enthusiastic individuals got together to address wasteland development programmes in the Bundelkhand region of Central India. However, instead of focusing on the tried and tired techniques of wasteland development, they concentrated on the means of livelihood of the people living in the area, their vulnerability to shocks, and their coping and adaptive strategies. This was the birth of the model community, TARAGram. With the assistance of Development Alternatives (DA), the TARAGram initiative sought to create sustainable livelihoods by merging social, environmental and technological knowledge in a diverse set of asset-building activities ranging from micro-enterprise development to renewable energy installation to watershed restoration. The resulting diversification of livelihoods was fostered and enhanced through a range of training and consultancy services, which imparted skills to the TARAGram community in, for example, the production of handmade paper and bio-mass briquettes, and in the use of low-cost building technologies. Using local skills, local building forms, and sustainable, appropriate and low-cost technologies, the physical structure of TARAGram was built. By January 1996, it was completed, and the local workforce had grown to seventy people, coming from around twenty-five villages in a radius of fifteen kilometers (Haldar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 252-254).

A discourse rooted in the community's own priorities denies the fascination with 'gross' economic conditions and focuses rather on the daily productivity of its own members. 'Development', at some ethereal level of aggregate abstraction, fails to excite individual and collective action unless it is rooted in making livelihoods sustainable. To continue with our analogy, livelihoods signify the relationship between the productivity of the individual tree and its surroundings. Where this relationship is unidirectional and extractive it morphs into the parasitic, is scarred with ugliness, and ultimately succumbs to decay. Where the relationship is symbiotic, the productivity of the livelihoods builds upon and feeds into the productivity of its surroundings. The tree of sustainable development thrives only in the latter case. The lesson from TARAGram is that the diversity of livelihoods, efficient resource use, and optimum energy use are critical in the path of sustainable

development. This initiative showed that with a variety of livelihood options, there is sufficient distribution of use to ensure that no single resource is overstressed. TARAGram today serves as a model to bring together social, environmental and technological knowledge to generate sustainable livelihoods. Such livelihoods are needed in large numbers throughout India to slow rural-to-urban flight, and the deepening poverty it creates.

‘Sustainable livelihoods’ is about employment rooted in the productivity of the community itself. However, it is much more than just the creation of jobs. It is about productive work that requires minimal capital investment, creates income, offers meaning and dignity, and places the least pressure on the environment. It is employment that is rooted in the community in the sense that it gets sustenance from the productivity of the community and, in turn, invests itself in sustaining that same productivity (Agarwal and Narain, 1991). For example, sustainable livelihoods produce goods and services that cater to the basic needs of local people and simultaneously help them generate purchasing power to acquire these goods and services. It seeks the fruits of sustainable development not by pontificating about the great benefits of environmental sustainability or aggregate economic development (with its implied promises of ‘trickle-down’ benefits); it finds them, instead, by directly linking the sustainable development of one’s surroundings to the sustainability of one’s own livelihoods. This helps embed sustainable development in the ordinary, but most fundamental, business of living. This is related to, but different from, the discussion of the previous section because it not only calls for being rooted in the context of the community, but also for respecting and contributing to the life processes that make the community thrive.



**Focus on sustainable livelihoods puts the daily existence of people  
at the center of analysis**

Source: USAID

The TARAGram experience shows that the creation of sustainable livelihoods rests fundamentally on the choices we make regarding technology, financing systems and the functioning of the marketplace. It also needs strong institutions of local governance, which can create a sense of ownership by local people over the resources on which they depend for their livelihood, and the decision systems that guide their lives. While all of these requirements are the subject of the next chapter, the point to be made here is that just as a tree is to be recognized by its shade, sustainable development is to be recognized more by the livelihoods it provides in communities than the ‘development’ it bestows in the aggregate. Just as the shade is a service that the tree provides to its environs while also being itself dependent on the bounty of that same environment, sustainable livelihoods are both dependent on and a service to the community in which they are rooted.

In the example of TARAGram, Development Alternatives (India) has demonstrated not only that sustainable development requires sustainable livelihoods, but also that it requires a diversity of livelihoods. The initiative is a particularly powerful example because it shows that a whole variety of sustainable livelihood options are available. A host of other examples validate this lesson. Consider, for example, the case of the Santa Elena Rain Forest Project in Costa Rica (Guzman and Birch, 2002: Vol. 3: 365-370). The initiative is deemed a success in moving towards sustainable development not simply because linking livelihoods to ecotourism allowed better stewardship of the environmental resources in the nature preserve. While this was a very desirable result, it could also have been obtained in other ways that could not be described as sustainable development – for example, by fencing off the preserve and policing it more vigilantly. What makes this an example of sustainable development is that the quality and sustenance of livelihoods was positively linked to environmental stewardship. Once the goal of the project became the maintenance of the community’s livelihood, it unleashed creativeness and commitment from the community and triggered the individual and collective actions that triggered the transformation. Yet another example is that of the Area-Based Sustainable Livelihoods Project from Iran (Farvar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 6: 110-115). A key lesson, again, is that meaningful sustainable development requires the availability of a whole variety of sustainable livelihood options. The experience from Iran as well as from India suggests that processes that can sustain a range of livelihoods are likely to be the ones that can also lead to sustainable development. Recognizing the sustainability of livelihoods, then, is a key step towards recognizing sustainable development.

One of the interesting developments of the last ten years is that while the governmental and academic discourse has remained fixated on discussions of sustainable *development*, civil society practitioners have increasingly begun using the language of sustainable *livelihoods*. The discourse within our consultations also tended to revolve around the word livelihoods as much as development. One

explanation is that practitioners of sustainable development find the world ‘development’ laden with too much baggage. ‘Development’ is confused too easily with ‘growth’ and ‘progress,’ terms that are themselves difficult to pin down. One is always tempted to ask, “Development for whom, for what, where?” Importantly, development is viewed mostly as an aggregate concept. Governments in particular tend to view development as something that happens to nations, rather than individuals. Academics tend to follow suit. Adherents of markets tend to view development at an even more abstract level. In this era of globalization this leads to some absurd assertions; we are told repeatedly that the world today is more ‘developed’ than ever before, yet this is the same world in which the net number of the absolute poor is constantly rising and the gulf between the obnoxiously rich and the chronically deprived continues to widen.

Livelihood, on the other hand, is a much simpler concept, and certainly one that is more rooted in the daily lives of those who are being asked to make changes. It is a concept that is clearly and easily understood by the villager in Senegal and the slum-dweller in Thailand. Livelihoods can be understood at the level of the individual. This is important because meaningful action also tends to happen at the level of the individual. Just as rootedness in community gives a powerful relevance, urgency and meaning to sustainable development, so does rootedness in the individual; a focus on sustainable livelihoods engenders this rootedness.

It is not surprising then that so many of the initiatives that were identified as examples of sustainable development were describing themselves in terms of sustainable livelihoods. Sustainable development, it seems, is better recognized at the level of community and individual action than at the level of global or national policy. A focus on livelihoods emerges as yet another identifying mark of efforts that show success in achieving or moving towards sustainable development. It is important to note here that, although working towards sustainable livelihoods is certainly a good strategy or means for creating sustainable development, at a much more fundamental level it is a defining feature, indeed a goal of sustainable development. To state this somewhat differently and more boldly, a key lesson that emerges from this project is that an initiative is unlikely to lead to sustainable development unless it first ensures sustainable livelihoods.

## **Wise Use of Resources**

Kenya is one of the countries that face the so-called woodfuel crisis. The need for affordable energy by a rapidly growing population has, over time, placed the forest resources of the country under severe stress. Though the government had clear intentions to promote the conservation of woodfuel, particularly at the household level, its attention has been focused largely on forestry development projects. This focus has been mirrored in civil society initiatives, and since 1980, many NGOs – mainly schools, colleges, self-help community groups, the scout movement,



churches and special interest groups – have become actively involved in community forestry activities. In this process, a dramatic innovation was introduced by civil society in 1982: the formation of the Kenya Energy NGOs Association, or KENGO. KENGO brought together all energy-oriented, community-based organizations and NGOs to pursue a common strategy. The strategy encompassed the dissemination of energy technology, promotion of sustainable woodfuel production and consumption, and the leveraging of government support for woodfuel-related initiatives. Although KENGO was disbanded in 1995 after management disputes, its substantive success in the area of woodfuel use efficiency survived beyond its institutional demise. (See Kitevu *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 80-85).

Most importantly, KENGO recognized that the ‘crisis’ was not about lack of woodfuel; it was really about unmet energy needs of the communities that depended on woodfuel. A focus on the former very clearly leads to an emphasis on forestry conservation and development. A recognition of the latter, however, draws in a broader range of options, including energy conservation, from which the solution can come from. This recognition shifted the emphasis of the initiative rather dramatically; instead of placing the aggregate woodfuel needs of the community in direct conflict with the dwindling forest resources, the emphasis was placed on the characteristics of the community needs and on how these could be responded to without undue pressures on the forest resources. Instead of implying that the community was misusing its meager resources, the community was centrally implicated in the development of resource use strategies. They were now co-opted in a search for ways to use the resource more wisely. Quite simply, the perception of the community, both internally and externally, changed from being in competition with a declining resource base to being part of a forest stewardship solution.

The flagship program of KENGO was the fuel-efficient cookstoves initiative. The significance of efficient cookstoves for sustainable development can be gauged by the fact that a switch by a household in Kenya from a traditional to improved charcoal Jiko (the Kenya Ceramic Jiko, or KCJ) produces daily fuel savings of 33 percent and a reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> and CO emissions by 34 and 15 percent respectively. Similarly, a switch from the traditional 3-stone cook stove to the improved Maendeleo can yield fuel savings of 27 percent fuel and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> and CO emission by 27 and 42 percent respectively. By 1993, 780,000 units of the KCJ stove had been distributed in Kenya, of which 180,000 (increasing to 250,000 in 1994) were in rural and 600,000 in urban households. The World Energy Assessment Report (2000) states that 50 percent of urban households in Kenya possess at least one KCJ stove. Most of these were introduced free of charge through demonstration projects by KENGO and other civil society organizations.

The improved stoves also brought income generating opportunities, especially in rural areas. Women who would otherwise not have any type of formal employment

are increasingly finding work in the production of ceramic liners for the stoves. This has happened largely through local women's groups, since pottery is viewed as a woman's occupation. Thousands of artisans are also directly or indirectly employed in the production and marketing of the improved stoves. The artisans have had to learn new skills – mainly through observation – in making claddings and assembling stoves. Serving as a prime example of the downward effect of the 'experience curve' on costs, the price of the Maendeleo cook stove decreased from US\$15 initially, to US\$1-3 today. The decrease in cost is often described through an 'experience curve,' in which the 'learning rate' represents the cost reduction associated with each doubling of the accumulated production. In the case of the Kenyan cookstoves, the experience curve is consistent with a learning rate of 18 percent, or a progress ratio of 82 percent.

The reason to celebrate this as a success is because it demonstrates the need and the ability to seek efficiency at multiple levels and in multiple dimensions in the pursuit of sustainable development. Sustainable development success is 'recognized' here not only because economic efficiency is demonstrated by the falling prices of the efficient cookstoves as well as the savings over the life of the new units. It is recognized equally – and possibly more so – by the fact that the 'efficiency' being celebrated in the name of these cookstoves relates primarily to the more efficient use of the natural resource in question, woodfuel. In addition to being successful in terms of economic and natural resource efficiency, the experience also stands out as having demonstrated a programmatic efficiency by achieving economies of scale through demonstration and replication. Importantly, it induced new efficiencies in terms of time and health benefits to users – efficiencies that can themselves be multiplied when applied to the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in other dimensions.

This is an example of the wise use of a scarce resource precisely because it embodies multiple efficiencies. Resource efficiency is important to the pursuit of sustainable development, but focusing narrowly on it is insufficient. To be sustained, it has to become embedded within the resource use patterns of the community; it has to respond, therefore, not only to the economist's measures of efficiency but also to the logic of the community's life rhythms. An initiative can take root in a community only if it serves the community in demonstrable ways; to follow the flow of argument here, wise use of resources leads to more sustainable livelihoods and more sustainable livelihoods lead to more community rootedness. The case of efficient cookstoves in Kenya demonstrates that efficiency becomes rooted in wise-use practices when it builds on the coping and adaptive strategies of the communities themselves.

To return to our metaphor, the tree is likely to remain most firmly rooted where it respects and makes best use of the resources that its surroundings offer it. Sustainable development operates similarly; it tends to thrive best where it serves the livelihood interests of communities in using the resources at their command most



**Solar cookers travel far and wide. Women in Kurdistan using solar cookers**

Source: CENESTA

wisely. For sustainable development practitioners, the wise use of resources is not simply an optimization strategy for enhancing efficiency; it is a necessary condition for ensuring that sustainable development initiatives remain firmly rooted in the priorities of the community and, in fact, help strengthen the community. Wise use is, therefore, a key identifying mark of sustainable development in practice. Systems that are wasteful of their essential and scarce resources are not only unsustainable, they soon become parasitic. Left unchecked, they will eat away not only at their own ecological integrity, but at the integrity of surrounding systems that might otherwise have remained sustainable. The maintenance of ecological integrity is itself a key identifying mark of sustainable development in practice, as will be discussed next.

## Ecological Integrity

*Chanda Beel* is a large wetland located in the south central part of Bangladesh. Like many wetlands, it faces a number of major threats: overexploitation of fisheries and aquatic resources as well as various ill-conceived human interventions. These threats have degraded the wetland resources and ecosystems of this area. The common practice of 'de-watering' ponds to catch fish, for example, made fishing easier but killed the brood stock; thus, besides its adverse impact on the wetland, this practice also undermined the interests of the fisherfolk. Another problem lay in the fact that the series of government policy interventions were generally motivated by a single

objective or a small set of objectives related to fisheries, without paying attention to the integrated needs of the ecosystem. (See Ahmed *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 138-141).

Responding to the rapid deterioration of the ecosystem, the Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies (BCAS) launched a process for devising a people's participatory wetland management plan in the mid-1990s. Although BCAS had to contend with numerous conflicts of interests between the major stakeholders – fishers, farmers, government officials – the most important conceptual and practical problem was the lack of an integrated approach to management of the wetland. The key challenge was to get all stakeholders in the *Chanda Beel* ecosystem to understand the interests of their fellow stakeholders and to arrive at the realization that the long-term interests of each stakeholder would be served only if the interests of all were met. The transformation came when a set of competing stakeholders (for example, farmers versus fisherfolk) began to see themselves as a single community seeking its livelihoods from an ecologically integrated economy. Consensus was built, not from a set of tradeoffs between different stakeholders, but from the integration of interests. A process of intense dialogue resulted in consensus on such issues as fish conservation, banning of harmful fishing gear, and restrictions on harmful practices. For example, all pond owners were convinced not to de-water the ponds and instead to catch fish by netting, which preserved brood fish and other species in the wetland. In the process of devising the participatory wetland management plan, fisherfolk and farmers both came to realize that they had a common interest in maintaining the wetland's ecological integrity. Instead of being competing users of the same ecosystem, they thus became coordinating partners in its conservation. In essence, a community of interest was born.

This is a sterling example of a case where economic activity – in other words, development – is based on the direct use of a scarce and dwindling resource – in this case fisheries – and appears at first to imply direct conflict between development and environment. A conventional approach to sustainable development could well have asked how to use development as a tool for efficiently maintaining the ecological integrity of this threatened wetland. The danger in this question, however, is the general tendency towards fragmentation – separating development and environment (which often results in the advocacy of development first and environment later), and separating the various economic uses of the resource. While the *Chanda Beel* initiative did not ignore this question, it asked a different question: How would a better-endowed ecological system benefit the livelihoods of the communities that live in this ecosystem? For the communities themselves, the second question was far more persuasive in creating action. It led to an integrated approach in which development and the environment were not treated as separate goals. Ultimately, this is identified as an example of an activity that can lead to sustainable development because it proved effective in maintaining the ecological integrity of the wetland while making this integrity the basis of more secure and sustainable livelihoods.

The effective maintenance of the ecological integrity of the environment one operates within is indeed a key identification mark for recognizing sustainable development. But the insight that our review of sustainable development in practice points us towards is that it may not always be the entry point for effective action. Since ecological processes tend to be long term and slow, it is often difficult to gauge results over the short term. In seeking to recognize sustainable development as it happens, it is most useful to search for the synergies that exist between ecological goals and development priorities. Sustainable development is recognized not merely when the processes of environment and development are advanced simultaneously; it is recognized when they are advanced synchronistically.

Ecosystems cannot be understood via the precision of neat blueprints; nor are they like rivers which are governed by a single overarching force, the gradient of its topography. Ecosystems are supported, much like the trees that might grow in them, by a multitude of interlinked processes that must be sustained, in harmony, for the ecosystem to retain its health. The logic of the ecosystem, and of the tree, is an integrative logic. In an era when knowledge has become ever more specialized and atomized, local and traditional knowledge is often the best repository of such integrative wisdom. Even where it is not, scientific knowledge needs to be introduced in a way that promotes, rather than undermines, the complex interconnections of ecological integrity.



**The integrity of one's environment must always be respected.  
Sheep herders in Balochistan**

Source: IUCN-P

The importance of ecological integrity is possibly the most obvious identifying mark of a successful sustainable development initiative; an initiative should be effective in maintaining the ecological integrity of the environment within which it operates; it should, in other words, be rooted firmly in the ecological context. However, a clarification is needed at this point. Since much of the sustainable development literature starts from the need for environmental conservation, and since the concept was initially pushed by environmentalists, there is an unstated assumption that ecological integrity is *the* primary goal of sustainable development. Conversely, it has also led to the popular misconception that sustainable development is essentially an ‘environmental’ concept. However, the perspective emerging from our consultations suggests that while sustainable development certainly includes the environmental dimension, it is not solely an environmental concept. This leads to an important insight: implicit in much of the discussion on sustainable development is the suggestion that the real goal of sustainable development is to maintain ecological integrity, but since ‘everything is linked to everything’ one has to begin with development as a means of getting to ecological integrity. While such a perspective is not erroneous, it is incomplete. The examples identified in our consultations and in the accompanying volumes suggest that for many practitioners the link between development and environment is not unidirectional and linear, it is synchronous. That is, rooted development can lead to the maintenance of ecological integrity just as the maintenance of ecological integrity can lead to rooted development.

## Adaptability

In the mid-1970s, a very small experiment began to empower the most impoverished in one village in Jobra, Bangladesh. The result of this experiment, now called Grameen Bank, is one of the world’s most successful exemplars of micro-credit and one of the very few initiatives that has been visibly successful in ‘scaling out.’ Today, the Grameen Bank is disbursing loans of more than 15 billion Bangladesh Taka to more than 2.5 million borrowers, has more than a thousand branches, and operates in 40,000 villages in Bangladesh (Ahmed *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 127). Phenomenal as the growth of the Grameen Bank has been, the manner in which its model has been replicated, adapted and duplicated all over the world – including in a number of industrialized countries such as the United States – is even more phenomenal. This success has not come simply from mass-producing micro-credit. It comes, instead, from a model that is designed to be adaptable to local realities; indeed, by requiring local support groups and credit guarantors, the model demands that adaptability as a pre-requisite for replicability. The seed that was first planted in Jobra not only grew up to be a strong and sturdy tree, it is today a thriving forest.

The ‘great’ in great transitions refers not only to the scope of change that is being willed, but also to its scale (Raskin *et al.*, 2002). If a great transition is to be ‘willed’, it has to be willed both boldly and broadly. While the importance of being rooted in

individual, localized and particular actions is paramount to sustainable development, this must serve as a trigger for broader and wider changes in society at large. Ultimately, sustainable development is to be recognized not only for the nature of the changes that are brought about, but for the scale at which they are brought about. To put it differently, the tree of sustainable development is to be recognized not only by the fruits it bears on its branches, but also by how widely it can disperse its seeds and how well its off-spring can flourish in and adapt to various climes and conditions.

This poses a particular dilemma for civil society. The myriad examples detailed in the accompanying volumes testify to the fact that civil will tends to be expressed most effectively at the level of the individual, the local and the particular. However, to usher in ‘great’ transitions, this will has to be translated to much larger scales, and ultimately at global levels. The problem is discussed often in the literature as the challenge of ‘scaling-up’ (Sheldon, 1987; Uvin, 1996; Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Najam, 2000b). The notion being that bottom-up approaches start small and grow bigger and will scale-up in that process. This model is similar to a small business turning into a market giant by processes of mass production, licensing, franchising and the like. Indeed, a few – but very few – civil society organizations such as the Grameen Bank have been able to follow such a model in their quest for sustainable development. For the most part, however, the promise of scaling-up by simply following models borrowed from the market world has not been fulfilled.

A principal challenge in terms of scaling-up comes from the difficulties of retaining community rootedness as one grows. Mass production might have done wonders for Henry Ford, but it is fraught with difficulties or champions of sustainable development. One size does *not* fit all and solutions that work the best are invariably tailored for and rooted in the communities from whence they come. In contrast to scaling-up, scaling-out seeks scale from demonstration, adaptation and imitation rather than mass-production. The model here is not merely of success leading to ‘growth’ in size, but of success leading to imitation and adaptation by others.

A conscious desire for adaptability emerges as a characteristic identifying mark of sustainable development in action. Consider for example, the ‘Servicio Pais’ program in Chile (Blanco *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 187-190). Conceived by the National Council to Overcome Poverty, the program recruits young people willing to undertake voluntary civil service for national development. They are then placed in Chile’s poorest districts and localities to assist in projects targeting social development within the context of local realities and constraints. The program explicitly seeks to build the capacities of these young people to understand and adapt to the local realities in which they are placed. This is different, and potentially more effective, than the conventional way of thrusting ‘capacity’ from above. The scaling-out happens not from taking an idea that works in one instance and duplicating it elsewhere; it emerges from planting the agents of change – much like a tree spreads its seeds – all over and giving them

the tools and encouragement to adapt to the realities of their host environments.

Given our analogy, another particularly apt case of how this sustainable development can be scaled out comes from Palestine and the efforts of the Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees (PARC) to encourage the development and use of local seed varieties (Rahmanian *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 6: 57-62). In the late 1980s a PARC extension worker, Ismail Dieg, observed that the productivity of local crops had decreased; the productivity of watermelons was shrinking dramatically and local tomatoes had nearly lost their entire market share. In 1989, PARC and the British charity UNAIS launched a program for reversing the alarming decline through the use and productivity of local seed varieties.

Local (or traditional) seeds are those produced in a particular place or climate and that have been selected and maintained by local people, in the local growing environment. These local seeds were developed over the years as farmers saved the seeds from their best performing plants. Around the world, this type of traditional system has functioned well for many years; local varieties that are highly suited to prevailing conditions have emerged over the years from the synergy of natural selection and farmers' selection. In Palestine, local vegetable seed varieties have played an essential social, economic and environmental preservation role in dryland agriculture, which dominates in the region. Local seed varieties are preferable because they are rain-fed crops and need less water. They are also easier to reproduce by farmers, and require less chemical fertilizer. In addition, local vegetables play an important political role by reducing dependency on external inputs and markets.

The problem noted by Ismail Dieg at PARC was that, despite these benefits, local farmers were increasingly turning to 'introduced' varieties in order to take advantage of a wider marketing season and/or other opportunities. Modern methods of agricultural development, promoted by the seed industry and by agro-chemical and agro-business interests heightened disregard for local seeds. Most vegetable-producing areas have experienced an accelerated deterioration of variety since the 1980s because cross-pollination occurs between the local and introduced varieties when cultivated alongside one another. This leads to a 'dilution' or loss of the desirable characteristics of local seeds. The traditional seed-saving knowledge was no longer able to preserve the stability and quality of local varieties. As a result, farmers planted deteriorated local varieties or less suitable 'standard' varieties and their incomes declined. They often had to abandon their land as it ceased to support their livelihoods.

The PARC-UNAIS project began by asking the farmers in the area to identify the problems and suggest solutions to them. The project was implemented with the active participation of local farmers, extension workers, and a seed development expert – in fact, participation was a key concern and top priority. These groups were all involved in the baseline survey as well as the implementation of the seed



improvement activities, based on natural selection and the monitoring of the plants. Local farmers were chosen based on the criteria of being interested in the project and having isolated plots of land, which was necessary to ensure a successful process of natural selection. After the first round of breeding work was completed, the improved seeds went through field trials by local farmers. Evaluation data was obtained through extension visits and evaluation workshops.

Since 1993, the project has been successfully implemented in the Central and Southern West Bank and recently activities were extended to Northern areas. Twenty-nine local varieties of vegetables have been under development. The project has resulted in improved local seed varieties with more attractive shapes of fruits, higher productivity, and increased resistance to pests. More than three-hundred farmers tried and evaluated the improved varieties, and were satisfied with the results. There is a high demand for improved seeds, especially because cultivating these varieties has led to significant increases in income due to improved crop quality and yield. On-farm seed production models were also developed for eighteen improved varieties in their original areas of cultivation. Farmers produce seed under a voluntary field inspection and seed growing control system provided by the Project, which allows the seed quality to be guaranteed. Annually, the seed distribution directly benefits two- to three-hundred farming families. Because of tiny amounts available for distribution, farmers are highly motivated to save their own seeds from the project's improved local crops and to use them for planting. They also share these seeds with their neighbors.

The strategy for scaling out was based not on perfecting a product and then disbursing it widely, but by involving local farmers in the very design phase of the project. This allowed for demonstration learning as well as opportunities to adapt the process to local realities, including seed varieties.

The Grameen Bank has demonstrated that it is possible to scale up, but its most resounding success has been in scaling-out by perfecting a program that can be adapted for and imitated in varying contexts. Programs such as the *Servico Pais* in Chile and *PARC* in Palestine suggest that it is both possible and desirable to design programs that actively seek scaling-out. For sustainable development to take root, it has to take root across wide areas and in high concentrations. There is a large range of mechanisms by which ideas that start small and are highly contextual to their local environments can spread out. What is common in most of the ideas that are able to do so – and what seems to be an identifying mark of sustainable development in practice – is a conscious effort to design initiatives that are adaptable to local realities. The distinction is that, rather than seeking processes that are ‘sturdy’ enough to work anywhere, sustainable development is propagated best by ideas that are flexible enough to be adapted to variable and varied local realities.

An alternative way to think about scaling is to consider the dynamics of ‘scaling

out’ rather than of ‘scaling up.’ While rivers grow by becoming ever-mightier, and buildings by becoming ever-larger and ever-taller, trees flourish not only by growing taller and wider but also by spurring the growth of other trees – new trees that are as rooted in their particular communities as the original ones were in theirs. The seeds and saplings carry the ‘message’ of the original tree not only to other locations, but also to other times. Analogously, adaptability is a recognizable and demonstrable quality that allows sustainable development to scale-out over space as well as time. This brings us to the next key quality of sustainable development in practice: its durability.

## **Durability**

In 1996 the Senegalese government introduced a new policy of municipal decentralization, which enhanced the roles and responsibilities of local government. The mayor of the town of Pikine, a settlement of over one million people located in the suburbs of Dakar, resolved to use this new opportunity to draw up and implement a development plan for Pikine. Such plans are devised and revised all across the world, especially in developing countries, every day. But Pikine was different. It began its search not by listing all the things it wanted today, but by imagining what type of town they would like to live in, in the future, and how such a vision could be achieved and made durable. The Pikine experiment has focused on more than just planning for development, it is a search for development that will last (Cisse *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 315-320).

New forms of collaboration between town authorities and civil society are currently being tested in different parts of the African continent. But the ‘Town Project’ of Pikine is different from many others because of the emphasis it placed on strategic participatory planning processes. At its core, it is a grand dialogue among the town citizens to envision the type of development for their town that would be both desirable and durable. The purpose of the dialogue is to root the process as well as its product within the realities and aspirations of the people of Pikine. To assist in designing and conducting this grand dialogue, the mayor of Pikine sought the support of the ecology and population unit of ENDA, which is headquartered in Dakar and is one of the best-respected global NGOs working on such issues.

This example highlights a characteristic that is recognizable in many instances of sustainable development in practice: a conscious and concerted desire to ensure that the transformation will not only happen, but will persist. Seeking to implement a process of participatory planning, in keeping with the local action plans in Agenda 21, the ‘Town Project’ aimed to initiate a process of local urban transformation to improve the environment and living conditions in Pikine, placing emphasis on sensible governing and a sustained dialogue between the citizens and political leaders. This dialogue has consciously and consistently involved the major stakeholders, including town council members, non-governmental organizations,

associations and the private sector. The ultimate goal is to provide these local institutions with suitable negotiation tools and plans supported by financial and technical partnerships, in order to assure that the concrete progress achieved is repeated in other areas and levels of the town, and is thereby durable over time.

The main motivations of the process have been to a) address the problems related to livelihoods, environment, local development in suburban areas, and b) conduct with local stakeholders a participatory process in order to identify key development priorities of the city, as well as to formulate an action plan. Three different steps were taken to encourage discussion, exchange ideas and facilitate the collection of information in order to work out the development plans. The first stage was to set up forums for discussion in each of the 16 districts of the town where, for two days, the main players met to discuss questions about the local environment, economic and social development, as well as questions on education, culture and sporting activities. The second stage was to create Local Follow-up Committees (LFC), which would draw up a plan of action based on the recommendations made, encourage the execution of the activities, and improve relations and exchange between the town administration and the population. The third stage was to establish five Specialized Theme Commissions (STC) at a local level, to provide a framework for thought and advice on the environment, socio-economic development, sensible government, public-spirit, communication and exchange of information, as well as on developing the education sector, culture and sporting activities.

Clearly it is difficult to measure the impact of such a project after just a few years. Observations can only be based on indications reflecting the progress made or the barriers encountered by the project. However, early evaluations suggest positive movement in a number of directions. First, the information concerning planning and the survey and analysis of suggestions for municipal development have helped to build a shared vision of local development. Second, an active civil society is emerging and assuming a role that is already well enough developed to assist the local administration in decision making processes and the implementation of projects. Third, new methods of dialogue between the different players have been adopted, principally the re-creation of dialogue and relations between the politicians and those involved at the municipal level. Fourth, the positive impact recorded on practices of local management; the project created a platform for citizens to contribute to the management of their local area, and thus helped to reshape local leadership. Members of grassroots community organizations now have increased responsibilities, resource people have been identified following a discussion process; and grassroots community organizations – by participating in local committees – have changed their role from merely carrying out orders to becoming partners in planning activities.

While durability itself something that can be measured only in hindsight, the aspiration for durability is a recognizable identification mark of initiatives that are

likely to lead to sustainable development. They, therefore, invest in the process of rootedness; they nurture the agents of change, they create constituencies of reform, and develop a momentum for sustainable development that is ultimately larger and more durable than the activity itself. Pikine is a good example because it explicitly seeks to outgrow its project status and to build in mechanisms that can adapt to changes over time. Although called a 'project' this example is very much about designing a process. More importantly, the very goal of the 'project' is to create a process of participatory planning for sustainable development in Pikine that will outlast this project. The project clearly seeks, and is designed to seek, not just sustainable development at a point in time, but sustainable development over time.

This is a vital identifying mark of sustainable development because questions of scale relate not only to space but also to time. Sustainable development that works must be seen to work not only in lots of places and in lots of contexts, but also over long periods of time. The very use of the word 'sustainable' requires that processes that are recognized as such should be able to adapt to changing times as well as changing contexts. Much like a grand tree, the robustness of sustainable development is recognized not only by its vitality at a given point in time but its longevity over time.



**Development that lasts is often built upon traditions that have lasted**

Source: CENESTA

It may be self-evident that sustainable development must be sustained over time. It is more difficult, however, to search for examples that can testify to this defining characteristic of sustainable development. Given the decade-long context we are operating in, not enough time has passed for such a verdict to be passed. However,

two important points need to be made in this regard. First, processes that last must not be confused with projects that last. Indeed, to be truly sustainable, projects will merge into changed practice and die off at some point. A striking example of this is be the case of efficient cookstoves in Kenya, discussed earlier (Kitevu *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 80-85). The project itself no longer exists in any recognizable form. The institutional structure that had been created to propagate the transition to efficient cookstoves – KENGO – has all but disintegrated. Yet, the transition has taken root and seems to have developed a momentum of its own. As one searches for examples of sustained sustainable development, the visible decay of projects and organizational structures may well be a sign of success as often as it is one of failure.

A second point that seems intuitively logical is that, to be sustained over time, sustainable development processes will have to adapt over time. Let us again consider an example that we have already discussed, the TARAGram in India (Haldar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 252-254). As realities change over time, so must the contours of this experiment. Indeed, a benefit of being rooted within community realities with a focus on livelihoods is that it induces an incentive for adapting to these changing realities over time. A static TARAGram is not a sustainable TARAGram. Just because a lot of successful sustainable development initiatives tend to be rooted in traditional knowledge and practice does not mean that they are frozen in the past or harken to a static vision of what was. While some do indeed present such a caricature of sustainable development, evolution dictates the growth of sustainable development as much as it does of trees; it is an essential feature and one that is often designed into the very best example of sustainable development practice.

## Connectedness

The Chilean region of Antofagasta has a total population of just under half a million. However, a significant proportion of the population is concentrated in urban zones, with only 3.4 percent living in rural areas most of whom are indigenous Atacameñans. Mining is the main economic activity in the region, contributing 62 percent of the regional GDP in 1996 and employing close to 12 percent of the regional work force. Since 1999 a deep partnership has developed between the indigenous community, mining workers and mining companies that has resulted in each feeling more connected to the others and to the land from which their livelihoods are derived (Blanco *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 190-193). A quantifiable manifestation of this connectedness is that a foundation set up by the main mining company in the region invested approximately US\$220,000 in education, US\$512,000 in health, and US\$330,000 in social development in the year 2000. In each case, the local community supplemented this substantially with their own resources and time in kind. The benefits have flowed to all parties. For example, the community-training program has given people the ability to improve their capacities

for livelihoods, while the mining company has been assured a better trained workforce. A deeper but less quantifiable manifestation is that this model is held up as a reference point with respect to corporate social responsibility and public-private cooperation, for citizens, public and private agents in the region and the country. The mining corporation's investment in an area that provides their shareholders with great profit is commendable but not necessarily unique. Civil society forces, the world over, have been able to convince, cajole or coerce major corporations to adopt higher standards of social responsibility. What is noteworthy in this example is the structure of this partnership and the realization of all parties that their connection to the source of their sustenance and livelihoods is more than just a financial transaction. Sustainable development practice, much like a tree, thrives best when all the elements that it is connected to are also thriving.

Before the emergence of this connectedness in Antofagasta, each element of the community was thriving in its own right but the community as a whole was not. The mining company, Compañía Minera Escondida Limitada (MEL), was making a good profit from its operations in the region. From the perspective of workers, the level of unemployment was low in the absolute and lower than elsewhere in the country. For the residents, the income levels in the region were well above the national average. The only problem was that, instead of adding up to a picture of all-around prosperity, the region was second lowest in terms of human development index in the country. This was manifested in the poor quality of life of the region's inhabitants, from lack of infrastructure and public services, to spatial and administrative disorganization, a lack of public space, low levels of cultural and recreational activity, and a range of environmental problems, including water scarcity, water use, conflict, and lead pollution.

One key to understanding the regional circumstances is through the lens of 'camp culture', reflected in the physical surroundings, in the homogeneity of employment, and in the services associated with extractive mining activity. Realizing that no tree can flourish for long without being connected to its various sources of nourishment, the community and the mining company set about creating a new model for a relationship of interdependence and connectedness. The Escondida Mining Company Foundation (FME) was set up as a mechanism through which the company could contribute to the development of the region and its inhabitants. The foundation, created in 1996, is an autonomous, non-profit-making institution that seeks innovation in corporate social responsibility and faces the issues of mining operation impacts. The Foundation's Board of Directors is made up of well-known national figures, representatives from the company, community members, and employees. Also, since 1999, it has had an Advisory Council, made up of people from the public, private and non-governmental sectors in Antofagasta, which supports the decisions to be made in the specified areas of work. Forty-four projects were completed in 2000 and a further forty-four were being carried forward into 2001, benefiting a total

of 28 thousand people. A total of US\$15 million is budgeted by the Foundation for the 2001-2005 period. The FME seeks to foster social links by means of a ‘good neighbour’ policy that consists of keeping the community informed about its activities, as well as achieving “close collaboration with the authorities and organisations connected to the national mining industry.”

One important issue is the work developed with the indigenous communities, which led to an office being opened for the foundation in San Pedro de Atacama, a district with a strong indigenous presence. The Escondida Foundation also collected and gathered information on the Atacameñan People with the publication and dissemination of the “History of the Atacameñan People” in 2000. A development fund was also set up for the Atacameñan People of Peine in order to pay compensation to the community for water rights acquired by the Escondida mining company. The Atacameñan communities have valued this kind of work and they mention it as an example of positive interaction between mining companies and their communities in an area where relationships can be complicated due to water scarcity. In focusing on the concept of being a ‘good neighborhood’ the corporate-sponsored Foundation has been able to break the traditional sectoral barriers and now works with local workers, indigenous communities and other community residents to actualize a shared vision of a good and sustainable future.

What is important in this example is that partnership is not about a handout. The striking element in this case is not the amount of money that the Foundation has invested in the region, but the effort it has made to build real connectedness. By including community representatives on its boards and by giving local people a say in the projects it undertakes it not only builds on community rootedness, which is itself a fundamental feature of sustainable development, but also is likely to leave a legacy of meaningful collaboration.

The identifying mark of potential sustainable development that can be recognized in this example is an explicit understanding by all stakeholders that all must remain positively connected to each other for any one to benefit. This sense of symbiotic interdependence – the realization that trees grow best when they grow in harmony with their surroundings and in connection with their environment – can be easily recognized in the many examples that our authors consider to signify sustainable development in practice. While this book and its accompanying volumes are an unabashed celebration of civil will and civil society’s contribution to putting sustainable development in to practice, there is no attempt to demean the contribution of other actors. While we certainly make the argument that civil society has been singularly most active in pursuing sustainable development and is singularly well placed to lead the charge in this direction, it would be a grave mistake to consider civil society to be a force in opposition to other actors, including the state and the market. The whole point of sustainable development is that it seeks to build on the synergies between sectors and between actors. While

civil society organizations have demonstrated a leadership and an investment of civil will, the most successful examples of sustainable development tend to be those where this leadership and will have mobilized the forces of the state and market to work in harmony with civil society. Indeed, to recognize sustainable development is to recognize the potential and the promise of collaborations that are both cross-sectoral and cross-actoral.

Let us revisit briefly some of the examples already discussed elsewhere. The great transition in water harvesting that has been brought about along the Arvari River is a testimony to the civil will of the community of *Bhaonta-Kolyala* and others who live along that river (Haldar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 248-252). However, it is a transition that has since been embraced and amplified by the government of Rajasthan. Here is a case of civil society leading the way for change in government policy, not by adversarial means, but by the sheer force of demonstrating the strength of a good idea. The story of the *Chanda Beel* in Bangladesh is similar (Ahmed *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 138-141). Here, too, it was innovation by civil society that opened the doors for more meaningful collaboration with government after the benefits of doing things differently were demonstrated. In both cases ‘doing things differently’ essentially meant doing things cross-sectorally. In both cases, the bridges of collaboration that needed to be built were not only between government and civil society but also between fisher-folk and farmers, grazers and irrigators, agronomists and ecologists. The key turning point in each story is when those who are used to viewing things within their narrow sectoral or actoral confines are finally able to see across those divides.

The stories that we heard from Kenya about efficient cookstoves (Kitevu *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 80-85) and from Senegal about the Pikine Town Project (Cisse *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 315-320) were similar in character but with an important difference. Here again, the breakthrough came when narrow notions of sectoral and actoral confines were broken down. However, in both these cases civil society was able to use existing government initiatives to construct an expression of civil will that led to sustainable development action. In both cases, civil actors found an opening in stated government policies and used it to implant an innovative program of transformation. Examples of connectedness and partnership between disparate actors abound in the accompanying national and regional reports. For example, the Kipepeo Butterfly Project in the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest in Kenya is administered through a partnership between the East African Natural History Society and the National Museums of Kenya (Kitevu *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 87-90). The project seeks the sustainable utilization of butterfly biodiversity and also collaborates with various community groups. Communities that were previously dependent on forest resources now enjoy a new source of income by raising butterfly pupae for export. Sustainable development emerges when the various actors involved can successfully identify their specific advantages in skills and their overlapping interests. The remarkable



growth of EcoClubs in Argentina and the success of joint forest management projects in India testify to the fact that such collaborations are not only possible and desirable but are a defining characteristic of sustainable development in practice (Vilar, 2002: Vol. 3: 108-111; Haldar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 254-257).

This final defining feature or identifying mark of ‘connectedness’ posits that sustainable development in practice tends to involve a variety of actors working in coalitions, alliances and networks. Trees grow not at the cost of other lives in their surroundings, but in harmony with them. So does sustainable development. The key lesson here about sustainable development seems to be, not only that everything is related to everything, but also that everyone is related to everyone. More importantly, sustainable development works only when everyone works. Sustainable development, quite clearly, is a team sport.

## Conclusion

The qualities that make a great and wondrous tree cannot be precisely defined, but a great and wondrous tree can be recognized very easily. Indeed, it is not possible *not* to recognize it when one is confronted with a great and wondrous tree. The very same is true for sustainable development.

To the experienced and examining eye, a great tree in the making can be recognized even as it is growing. The identifying marks can be recognized and where these elements of potential greatness are provided nourishment, the tree flourishes to eventual grandeur. The key identifying marks of sustainable development can also be determined relatively early in the development of any initiative. This chapter concludes that the questions to be asked when planting the seeds of sustainable development are quite similar to the questions that guide the planting of a tree. Will the tree be firmly rooted in the soil or community in which it will grow? Will the tree be rooted in the needs of its environment, will it provide shade, fruit and fragrance, will it be the basis of sustainable livelihoods? Will the tree make the best and wisest use of the resources from which it gets nourishment and sustenance? Will the tree respect the ecological integrity of its surroundings, never putting that integrity in jeopardy, building on rather than negating the complex interconnections of its ecology? Will the tree thrive, not only in its own growth, but by spurring the growth of other robust trees like itself? Will it thrive by propagating its robustness over time? Will the tree remain connected to other elements in its surroundings, seeking as well as imparting new strengths in that connectedness? These qualities, in themselves, may not guarantee that the initiative will eventually achieve its potential; but where nurtured with care and provided the right sustenance, trees and initiatives that demonstrate these traits have the best chance of bearing the sweet fruits of sustainable development.

Much as the caring gardener seeks out the most promising saplings and invests

gentle care and nourishment in them, the managers of sustainable development – whether they come from civil society, government or business – need to identify the most promising initiatives and then invest in them the right nourishment. This chapter sought to highlight seven key identifying marks which can help us identify the most promising saplings. The next chapter will highlight seven key investments that can help make these saplings blossom.

# Chapter 5:

# Willing Sustainable Development

*Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.*

– Albert Einstein

The ‘bird’s nest problem,’ a classic conundrum from the early days of the artificial intelligence literature, holds that computers could be programmed to build a machine but not to build a bird’s nest. The reasoning is simple: the components of a machine are designed to fit together, but the debris on the floor of the forest is not designed for making a bird’s nest.

The community of people who have contributed to this series of books – through writing as well as participation in consultation and advice – view the practice of sustainable development as an analogue of the bird’s nest problem. They see it as the epitome of simplicity yet incredibly complex in practice, with unpredictable results and chaotic outcomes. Its ingredients are everywhere and nowhere because, like the debris on the floor of the forest, they are not designed to be put together. Small beginnings – the proverbial flapping of a butterfly’s wings – can lead to storms, whereas the huge storms unleashed through policy or legislation may often end up as innocuously as, well, the mere flapping of a butterfly’s wings. It involves, in other words, a form of entrepreneurship – in the sense of the term used by the great economist Josef Schumpeter (1934) – an activity for which there is no exact precedent, a form of ‘gap-filling,’ *bricolage*, or putting things together (such as the forest debris), a McGyveresque approach to social change, a setting of ideas into motion, a problem solving process that converts ideas and inventions into practical reality.

But entrepreneurship needs to be combined with a second ingredient, namely civil will, without which sustainable development will remain beyond reach. Sustainable development has been achieved in practice mainly through the imagination and will of ‘public sector’ entrepreneurs – just as industrialization and economic growth took place through the imagination and will of *private* entrepreneurs. We put ‘public sector’ in quotes to imply that the term refers not to bureaucrats or political leaders – although, undoubtedly, some bureaucrats or politicians would fall into this category – but generically to individuals throughout civil society who seek to serve

the public regardless of whether or not they are paid by the state.

Besides being different from bureaucracy, civic entrepreneurship is also different from private enterprise. It is a form of *civic* activity, an activity whose goal is to bring people together, build partnerships and networks, develop new ways of collaboration and interaction, and generally contribute to the social capital of society. It does not flow inexorably from the profit motive, nor does its release require only the removal of obstacles or correction of market failure. Rather, it may be compared to a river flowing *uphill*, forced by the will of civic entrepreneurs. It is like a seedling, which needs to be nurtured, sustained and planted in the soil if it is to become a tree.

There are no ‘tricks’ or ‘short cuts’ for achieving sustainable development. It demands sheer grit, lots of hard work, perseverance, the courage to imagine sustainable tomorrows, and the will to translate this imagination into reality – a reality that helps overcome the development challenges of today. The stories that are chronicled in this series of books reveal varied paths to sustainable development; there is no single best route and no secret recipe. Depending on the context, environment, support, and nurturing, every seed will produce a different tree – and many will produce nothing at all. Yet, for the policy maker, for the philanthropist, for the financial donor, for the activist, for the academic, and most of all for the prospective civic entrepreneur, there are lessons to be learned from these stories, about ingredients that figure in every instance, and patterns that come up repeatedly.

In the previous chapter we argued that, while we might not be able to predict which seedling will produce which tree, we can certainly narrow in on the range of fruitful options. In this regard, we highlighted the seven key ‘identifying marks’ that can help us recognize sustainable development in practice. In this chapter, we go on to describe how to act in the face of these options, how to promote and nurture both entrepreneurship and civil will. We identify seven key investments that are likely to yield sustainable development dividends:

- Investment in people
- Investment in innovation
- Investment in institutions
- Investment in communication
- Investment in partnerships
- Investment in support systems
- Investment in imitation

Indeed, the last mentioned is perhaps the most important, and encompasses two very distinct possibilities. The first may be obvious from the metaphor used in this volume: Forests reproduce themselves through self-seeding, trees regenerate without human intervention, forests and even trees ‘walk’ long distances over periods of times, often

in response to changing climates and environments. Imitation is as ‘natural’ a process of self-reproduction of the practices of sustainable development as it is of forests. The only manner in which the pursuit of sustainable development has been sustained until now is through the natural process of self-regeneration through imitation.

The second possibility pertains to how imitation can transform the entire problematique by bringing together the three metaphors – the house, the river, and the tree – we have used. One purpose of recognizing sustainable development is to convert the chaotic and unpredictable process of civic entrepreneurship into a series of replicable and predictable actions – to convert the bird’s nest problem, as it were, into a problem that can be handled by a computer, or, to use Stephen Marglin’s (1990) concept, to epistemize the *techne* of sustainable development. Lessons that can be standardized can be imitated and replicated by others. Indeed, this is a central purpose of this volume. A related purpose of describing the process is to identify profit opportunities, and thus engender a partnership between private entrepreneurship and civic enterprise. Sustainable development at this moment in history may be akin to water flowing uphill through sheer force of will but, unless some of its elements at least take the form of water flowing downhill, it will be impossible to sustain in the long run.

The process of civic entrepreneurship can be supported through various forms of investment. The following sections seek to flesh out the nature of these investments. They are addressed on the one hand to policy makers and donors – as advice on measures they could take to guide the direction of change towards sustainable development – and on the other hand to the current and future champions of sustainable development, bringing to them stories of what others have done before them. Finally, these are addressed to academics, inviting them to reflect on measures that can help standardize, structure, and render transparent what has until now been a chaotic and dense experience.

These sections have been organized in a recursive order. If you are a donor, invest in a person, not just any person, but a person with an idea. If you are a person with an idea (and have financial support), make sure you invest in institutions so that your work will last; and this means, among other things, invest in communications and partnerships. If you are a government policy maker, invest in supporting structures that enable the civic entrepreneurs to realize their ideas and build and strengthen institutions. Finally, whoever you are, imitate! All the great champions of sustainable development achieved success by borrowing unabashedly from others. This lesson is needed even more forcefully for governments, policy makers, donors, and business leaders, who need to learn to imitate the methods of the civic entrepreneurs in order to become full partners in the effort. Finally, if you are an academic, you have to describe, analyze, chronicle, and catalogue experience in such a way as to enable people to imitate.

These are investments into the *process* of sustainable development; none of them targets an ecological or development issue directly, but each of them – individually and in combination – seeks to create conditions that promote entrepreneurship and

unleash civil will, thus creating spaces where civic entrepreneurship can flourish. They may be likened to what in the private sector has recently been described as ‘incubation’ (Hansen *et al.*, 2000). What is needed is a system of civic incubators to nurture and support civic activities.

## Invest in People

In 1980 Agha Hasan Abidi, founder of the Bank for Commerce and Credit International (BCCI) and head of the BCCI Foundation asked Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan (“Khan Sahib” to his countless friends, associates and admirers), a renowned champion of community development, to initiate a ‘pilot’ project in Orangi. Orangi is a low-income, unplanned settlement on the periphery of Karachi, Pakistan’s largest and most cosmopolitan city, located in the south of the country. On the face of it there was nothing unusual about this request. Agha Hasan Abidi was a well-known philanthropist; the BCCI Foundation was already funding projects in Orangi whose development problems were legion; and Akhter Hameed Khan, although then in proclaimed retirement, was one of the world’s leading practitioners and exponents of community development. He had pioneered the innovative program of the Comilla Academy for Rural Development in what was then East Pakistan and has since become Bangladesh. It was entirely reasonable that the well-known philanthropist would ask the well-known development practitioner to launch a community development project in an area with well-known problems.

What was remarkable, and quite unusual, was that Agha Hasan Abidi and the BCCI Foundation were not making an investment in a project plan or proposal – there was none at this point. Nor were they investing in a particular development issue – although the project eventually focused on urban sanitation. They were investing in an individual, Akhter Hameed Khan. Although the original support provided by the BCCI Foundation was quite small, it was unusual in that it had no strings attached to it whatsoever: no deadlines were set, no priority areas identified, and no targets dreamt up. The investment was based not on a project proposal but on the idea that Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan was an individual who could make a difference. And he did. Instead of launching a project, he immersed himself in the community. Instead of telling the community what would be good for them, he began by asking them what they wanted. Instead of promising the community that he could generate resources on their behalf, he instilled in them the confidence that, if they worked for their own betterment, he would work alongside them.

The Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) which followed is one of the best known, most studied, and highly successful experiments in sustainable development and community mobilization (see Qadir, 2002: Vol. 4: 314-319). OPP began work in April 1980. Orangi’s population, currently estimated at over one million, consists largely of the working class: unskilled laborers, artisans, shopkeepers, peddlers and clerks. Official agencies have provided a few public facilities, such as main roads, water lines and electricity, as well as a few schools and hospitals. OPP considers itself to be a research institution whose objective is to identify and analyze outstanding research

problems in Orangi and then, through sustained action research and extension education, discover viable solutions. OPP's primary strategy is to promote community organization and self-management; by providing technical guidance, it facilitates the mobilization of local financial and managerial resources through cooperation.

OPP's initial research in 1980 outlined sanitation as a primary concern in the absence of sanitary latrines and underground sewer lines. Bucket latrines, soak pits and open sewers resulted in poor health from diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid, malaria and scabies. Poor drainage resulted in waterlogging, reducing property values and security. Local residents were aware of the problems but did not take action in the belief that official agencies would do so free of charge and that conventional sanitation was too expensive for them. OPP researchers in 1980 rejected solutions to the most pressing crisis – sanitation – based on foreign aid because local residents could not afford to repay the loans or maintain the systems. Research into an affordable system took about one year, as OPP managed to develop a design for an in-house and lane sanitation system that cost less than one-quarter of constructors' estimates. Staff then began to motivate residents of each lane to form organizations that could supervise the construction and maintenance of the system. The organizations were also responsible for collecting contributions from the community and managing the construction finances collectively.

In over two decades of operations, OPP has directly assisted more than one million people in one of the poorest areas of Pakistan's largest city, Karachi, to gain access to improved sanitation, and has also developed programs in housing technology, health, education support services, credit and income generation, social forestry and a rural development project.

Indeed, the 'OPP model' has since become the inspiration for a multitude of other projects and programs in Pakistan and around the world. What lies at the heart of this model, and also at the heart of so many other sustainable development successes, is the idea that individuals matter. Project proposals, blueprints and timelines are all useful devices but, when you are in the business of designing for change, it is the vision and commitment of individuals that make the key difference. Just as the BCCI Foundation had invested in the person of Akhter Hameed Khan, he invested in individuals as he built up his own team. He assembled a team of three, gathering information and getting to know the locale before designing the sanitation program. As the project grew, it managed to involve local and outside staff who were committed to the concept, providing a key input to its development. The later involvement of Arif Hasan as Principal Consultant is one of the factors in the project's achievements. The project that emerged took the notion to the next step. OPP invested not in particular problems, but in empowering the people in the communities. This people-centered approach has been the hallmark not only of the OPP model but of successful sustainable development initiatives all over the world.

To date, OPP has managed to facilitate the construction of virtually all lanes in the area (close to 6,400 lanes) and most of the houses. OPP's role had been primarily

to provide motivation and social and technical guidance. This is evidenced by the cost break-up in the sanitation provision project: between 1981 and November 1993, local residents had invested over Rs. 57 million in improved sanitation; during the same time, OPP had spent Rs. 3.8 million, or about 7 percent of the people's investment.

The key factors in OPP's success may be elucidated from the nature and methodology of the approach as well as the history of the project (see Box 5.1). However, the single most important feature in the evolution of OPP was the personal history and philosophy of Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan. Several years later, when a journalist asked Khan Sahib what was special about Orangi – implying that the success of the OPP was unique and non-replicable – the latter replied, tongue in cheek, "Orangi is not special; I am special"! There is more than a grain of truth to this flippant remark.

#### **Box 1: Key Factors in OPP's Success**

- The unique combination of experience, academic knowledge and dedication of the founder Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan in person was, arguably, the most critical factor for OPP's success.
- OPP has maintained a 'lean' operation, minimizing overhead and staff costs. There is an austerity and frugality in the manner in which the project offices and programs are run. This austerity and frugality was visible in the lifestyle of Akhter Hameed Khan himself, and thus, no one could accuse the director of hypocrisy.
- It also reduced dependence on donor agencies, allowing itself the freedom to respond to community issues as they arose and not taking any dictation on its agenda. Indeed, there are documented cases where OPP refused to accept financial assistance when it was not linked to the Project's basic approach. Most importantly, OPP prevented the growth of financial dependence within the community by facilitating self-help and development of appropriate, affordable technologies.
- Generating and fostering 'civil will' was an important component of the philosophy. Dr. Khan used to argue that "the underlying philosophy of OPP is that charity and subsidies are bad: people should not be made dependent on government organizations because then the program will become unsustainable. If the government takes care of everything, people become uninterested and will not maintain and care for the provided services."
- The approach relied on identifying one key problem of the community, dealing with it and only then moving on to other matters. This prevented the Project from spreading itself too 'thinly.' The approach of consolidating individual achievements before moving on, contrary to many 'integrated' NGO practices in the country, facilitated communities to be mobilized later.
- A distinguishing feature of OPP has been the small, manageable scale of community organization, in this case a lane, instead of huge supra-organizations. Local activists from within the community also found it easier to interact with smaller organizations.
- Capacity-building – developing skills of local residents – allows the Project to sustain its impact, which is an internal agenda of the community to begin with.
- Finally, OPP did not follow the more typical NGO approach of mixing local work with regional, national and international participation simultaneously.



Akhter Hameed Khan joined the Indian Civil Service (ICS), the most prestigious and cherished service of British India, in 1936. Nine years later, he resigned from the ICS, giving up enormous power and material benefits that went with it, explaining later that there was nothing more to learn from the British teachers, and that he needed a different kind of apprenticeship. This search led him first into manual labor and then to teaching. In 1958, he was appointed the Director of the Comilla Academy for Rural Development in what was then East Pakistan. The Academy was allowed to make the 100-square-mile area of a sub-district (covering about 300 villages) into a research laboratory for rural development. The research led to the design of a rural works program in the sub-district, with cooperatives and community organizations forming the backbone of the model, along with the training of local residents in infrastructure development and maintenance. The Comilla model was widely replicated in East Pakistan and elsewhere, and Khan Sahib was showered with awards at home and abroad. Soon after the upheavals of 1971 that led to the creation of Bangladesh, he left to teach at Michigan State University for six years. He was in his mid-sixties when he returned to Pakistan, ready to live a retired life until Agha Hasan Abedi asked him to initiate another project, this time in an urban slum in Karachi. It was a request he could not refuse.

The story of the OPP has many unique features, but as a whole it is not a unique story. What we have found from the study of the success stories assembled here is that success flows from the vision and commitment of key individuals as much, and often more than, from staid project parameters. The four individuals to whom this series of books is dedicated – Anil Agarwal, Jacques Bugnicourt, Junie Kalaw, and Omar Asghar Khan – were all representatives of this breed. They were people of vision and commitment, who were able to translate their vision into action. So was Charles Rouchouse, a retired scientific research engineer and member of the *Societe de Geographie et de la Societe Metrologique de France*, who founded the Popenguine Natural Reserve in Senegal (Cisse *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 308-315), or Akin Adejumo, a secondary school teacher in rural Nigeria, who almost single-handedly launched a spectacularly successful initiative for Guinea worm eradication (Okali, 2002: Vol. 2: 226-228), or Rajendra Singh of the Tarun Bharat Sangh, who inspired the rehabilitation of over 3,000 water harvesting structures in 650 villages in Rajasthan, India (Haldar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 248-252).

Of course, individuals matter everywhere. But they matter particularly in the pursuit of sustainable development, much of which is akin to the writing of music not yet heard. Because there can be no agreed formulas for achieving sustainable development, the specific formula has to be defined anew each time, for each specific situation. This is generally not because of variations in the technical aspects of the programs – indeed, there is remarkably clear understanding of the scientific details of conserving forests or rehabilitating rangelands or enhancing energy efficiency or abating pollution. The differences pertain to how to put the scientific

ideas into action on a sufficiently large scale, given the social, political, and economic resources of a community. Because the details of the project being implemented tend to be more fluid, the quality and vision of the people implementing the ideas becomes ever more important.

This, of course, makes things more complicated. Conventional development, with its preoccupation with engineering and infrastructure solutions, was much easier; once you had the blueprint, the dam would look exactly the same no matter who built it. Sustainable development is different. Because there are no blueprints, the ‘design’ phase has to happen not *before* implementation but *during* implementation. In this regard, it is analogous to jazz music: music that has to be rewritten in the act of playing it. The investment is made not in selecting the best sheet music but in finding the most innovative and sensitive musicians. The search for sustainable development must begin likewise: with a search for practitioners who are sensitive to the environments they work in and innovative in the approaches they adopt in their practice.

We want to conclude this section with two observations. First, while many of these practitioners have made their own way despite daunting obstacles, some of the greatest success stories involved sustained funding by visionary donors. Second, and more important, we do not wish to give the impression that sustainable development will occur only through great men or great women. It will occur when the person is united with the idea, the commitment, and the context. The responsibility of the policy maker, the incubator, or the donor is not to find the great woman or man, but to find the right combination that will unlock this possibility.

## Invest in Innovation

The word ‘innovation’ conjures images of a scientist – a Thomas Alva Edison or Alexander Graham Bell or Henry Ford – hard at work in a lab to produce a new product. The reality in sustainable development is quite different. In case after case we found that the idea itself was very simple – lending money to a poor woman, building a cooperative, harvesting drinking water in tanks or other structures – what was new was how it was implemented. In looking for ‘the person with an idea,’ experience teaches us that what matters is not the newness of the idea but the vision through which the idea is sought to be implemented.

For example, what could be simpler than exchange based on IOUs or barter? Yet, such simple ideas became the basis of innovative solutions in enterprising communities to the economic crises that have become endemic in the developing world. Here, we tell two such stories: the *bia* community currency in northeast Thailand, and the Global Barter Network in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Talk of currency crises brings up images of global financial markets, international

trade, currency speculators and stock crashes. However, the currency crisis faced by the residents of Naso sub-district in Yasothon's Kud Chum district in Thailand was a very local, immediate and enduring affair (de la Rosa, 2002: Vol. 5: 72-73). Naso sub-district is typical of Thailand's rural Northeast: 95 percent of the villagers are farmers and they have a long tradition of working together in solidarity. The region is blessed with the world's finest jasmine rice but suffers from poor water supply and soil conditions. The crisis faced by these villagers is one with which poor communities all over the world are all too familiar. Despite best efforts, they simply did not have enough currency in their pockets to meet basic needs.

The all-too-familiar response to this all-too-familiar problem is to think about increasing the income stream. The residents of Naso did that, but expenses still outpaced income. The problem, they realized, was related to the very structure of the market in which they operated. They received too little for what they sold and paid too much for what they bought. Their transactions as consumers and as producers were creating wealth, but not for them. So the residents of Naso decided to think outside the box. Since the market was not working for them, they decided to create a market of their own – one based on fair rules, and a currency of their own. This was the birth of the community currency called the 'bia.' The name derives from a type of shell that had been used as money before coins and notes were introduced to the region. One 'bia' is equivalent in value to, but not exchangeable for, one 'Baht' and is used as an interest-free community currency that comes in denominations of one, five, ten, twenty and fifty.

This innovative approach was built on a history of civic engagement. In 1983, a small group of villagers had joined volunteers of the Thai Holistic Health Foundation to address health concerns. This initiative led to cooperation with area hospitals to promote herbal medicines and educate the community on the health risks associated with agricultural chemicals and increased consumption of processed foods. Socially engaged Buddhism has played a key role in the district. A group of monks joined together to study community problems and work together with villagers to solve them. Subsequently, the group rallied the community to end exploitation at the hands of rice merchants. Because of inadequate storage and processing facilities in the region, small farmers were at the mercy of merchants when rice supply was high and demand was low. The villagers formed a cooperative called the Nature Preservation Association in 1991 to manage their own mill and acquire a second larger mill and weigh station.

Despite the success of the community activities, the leaders felt they could not sustain them. The Herbal Centre and Rice Mill helped increase local income but expenses were so high that little was left pay down the debts to the Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) and informal lenders. This raised concern about how the community could encourage more production at the local level and reduce the outflow of money, resources and people.

In September 1998, a group from the district attended a conference at the North Eastern Thai Foundation on community currencies and economic self-reliance. The conference gave several new ideas to the participants: perhaps the rice mill could pay its staff partly in a community currency; perhaps such a system could be used to encourage trade between the increasingly popular food security groups in their communities, and so on. There was a debate over whether or not to use a note-based system, as most of the villagers were familiar with using currency notes. Ultimately, it was agreed to use 'bia.'

The bia itself, was meaningless without local production and trade. Group members decided that the best way to promote the bia system was through the creation of weekly markets. The first market day was held during the launch of the community currency system. Promotional materials were prepared and awareness-raising activities were undertaken with both organizations and residents of the community. In March 2000, the Bia Kud Chum community currency system was formally launched, with use of the bia, as an exchange medium, restricted to six neighboring villages.



**Self-help: Rural women repairing a tap**

Source: IUCN-P

Less than two weeks after its launch, rumors spread that anyone caught with bia in his or her possession could be arrested for threatening national security. In April 2000, a team for the northeastern branch of the Bank of Thailand arrived in Kud

Chum to investigate and gather information. A report was submitted to Bank of Thailand offices in Bangkok, where a decision is still pending. In response to the actions of state authorities, project workers organized a panel discussion in Bangkok, involving the participation of Bank of Thailand representatives, economists, lawyers and politicians. The representative from the central bank's legal division agreed that since the bia could only be used within the community and there was no clear intention of the villagers to replace the national currency, the system was not illegal. He agreed that the principle of strengthening the community was good. Several senators also supported the idea. The dialogue enabled the members to regain their confidence and resume trading until the Bank of Thailand made a final decision.

Although a relatively recent initiative – one that is still being tested in the waters of experience – the story of the bia in Naso exemplifies a strategy that is common to many successful examples of sustainable development in practice. This is a story about investing in innovation, investing in a novel solution to an old problem. Sustainable development is more likely to come from innovative responses than from the replication of routinized solutions: since business-as-usual got us into this mess in the first place, investing in more business-as-usual is likely to only worsen the mess. The domain of sustainable development is the domain of bold thinkers and innovators, of civic entrepreneurs who are willing to learn from the experiences of others, but adapt them to their context by standing back, moving outside conventional thinking, and adapting solutions to their environments, traditions and contexts.

Take the case of three friends from Argentina – Carlos De Sanzo, Horacio Ravelo and Ruben Ravelo – who co-founded the Global Barter Network in 1995 with their first barter fair taking place in a Buenos Aires garage (Vilar, 2002: Vol. 3: 103-108). The idea of a barter network came to them as a response to the needs faced by friends and neighbors who were unemployed and lacked the money to meet their basic needs. Like the residents of Naso, Thailand, this Argentinean trio also decided to think outside the box. They invited twenty friends to Carlos's garage and asked them to bring a good or service to exchange with the others present. Tickets worth \$1 (in pesos) were distributed to all the participants and a game was set up in which everyone had twenty minutes to exchange goods and services with others and use up their tickets. As a result, a large quantity of goods and services were bartered and people left with merchandise and service vouchers that they could not have afforded otherwise.

The success of this first experience motivated new meetings with ever increasing numbers of participants. Today, at any given time, barter fairs are taking place in Argentina, organized by clubs in over twenty provinces and involving up to 100,000 families. All fairs have to abide by the ethical principles of fair bartering set up by the founders (see Box 5.2). The original barter fair, now named 'La Bernaleza' now attracts over 5,000 participants. The network is now becoming truly global and is being replicated in Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, USA, Canada

and Spain. Indeed, the success of the barter fairs has been so phenomenal that since 1997, the government of the municipality of Buenos Aires has also become involved in sponsoring them. Importantly, this community-led and bottom-up initiative has encouraged the emergence of a host of civic entrepreneurs and social leaders, particularly women who are especially active in these barter fairs. An additional benefit of these fairs is the strengthening of social capital and networks amongst friends, family and neighbors. This common experience motivates other common activities and initiatives.

### **Box 2: Principles for Fair Bartering**

The three founders of the Global Barter Network wanted to give a 'human face' to the economy. The ethical imperatives that motivated the creation of the barter network are present in its statement of principles, which establish the following articles for all those who participate in the barter fairs:

1. Our accomplishment as human beings does not need be conditioned by money.
2. We do not seek to promote articles or services, but to help us reach a superior sense of life through work, comprehension and fair exchange.
3. We believe that it is possible to replace sterile competition, profit and speculation with reciprocity between persons.
4. We believe that our acts, products and services can answer to ethical and ecological norms first and not market consumerism and short-term benefits.
5. The only requirements to become a member of the Global Barter Network are to attend group meetings, be trained and produce and consume goods, services and knowledge within the Circles of Quality and Self-help framework.
6. We support that each member is the only one responsible for his/her actions, products and services.
7. We consider that to belong to a group does not imply any dependency link, since individual participation is free and extended to all the groups of the network.
8. We support that it is not necessary that groups organize formally since the nature of networks implies the permanent rotation of roles and functions.
9. We believe that it is possible to combine group autonomy, managing its own internal matters, with participation in a network.
10. We recommend that participating groups do not support, sponsor or financially support – as members of the network – causes that are detached from the network goals, so as not to diverge from our fundamental objectives.
11. We believe that the best example of good behavior is our conduct within and outside the network. We keep confidentiality on private matters and prudence in the public exposure regarding network matters that could affect its future development.
12. We believe in the idea of progress in terms of the result of everyone's welfare, sustainable through time.

These two stories are illustrative of the main lessons with which we wish to conclude this section. The essence of sustainable development is its newness, but this newness

lies not in the idea itself but in its execution. The ideas are around us. What is needed is the vision and the will to transform the idea into action. What is striking about each one of these experiences is the paradoxical juxtaposition of an old and often very commonplace idea with a daring approach to translating it into something that will serve the goals sustainable development. Finally, in every single one of these instances, we find that this newness incorporates some element of building or rejuvenating a community, a network, an alliance, or a social group.

## Invest in Institutions

To begin this discussion, let us revisit the point made at the end of the previous section. Each of the stories we narrate in these books has a touch of uniqueness about it, in the sense that it helped achieve a goal that still eludes billions of people. Yet, at a substantive level, each of them also has a sense of the commonplace; indeed, at this level we found little that was entirely new. Akhter Hameed Khan organized cooperatives, an activity whose pedigree goes back centuries if not millennia; Muhammad Yunas lends money to poor women; Akin Adejumo harvested water for drinking; and Rajendra Singh built check dams. What could be simpler and more ordinary than these activities? Yet, what they and hundreds of others have done verges on the miraculous, because their innovation lies in making a simple idea work for thousands of people for years if not decades.



**Very often, tradition is the best source of innovation**

Source: IUCN-P

It is important to emphasize this point about the champions of sustainable development: *What they did is not new; what is new is that they did it!* They had to undertake a highly sophisticated form of research in order to be able to use ideas that are simplicity itself. They are innovators in the true sense of the term, but their innovation lies not in the product, as it were, but in the process. Indeed, a key lesson from these stories is that the pursuit of sustainable development requires innovation in the ‘how’ rather than the ‘what.’

The simplest way of describing the ‘newness’ in activities that on the surface appear to be commonplace is that they succeeded in creating institutions. Anyone could lend money to a poor woman, or to ten, but Muhammad Yunus built an institution that has provided this service year after year to millions of women. Akhter Hameed Khan set out to promote rural development and created a program that changed the way we think about development. Horacio and Ruben Ravelo wished to help their unemployed friends and neighbors meet their basic needs and succeeded in creating a global institution. Institutions help extend an initiative beyond the life of the individual – indeed, beyond the capacity of a single individual. They enable communities to act collectively and thus go beyond the conception as well as the life of the original initiative.



**Good livelihoods make good communities. Women at work in Vanuatu**

Source: USAID

Take the story of water harvesting in Rajasthan, India. We referred to this example in the previous chapter, but it bears repetition (see Haldar *et al.*, 2002: Vol 4: 248-252). At its core, this is not a story about water; it is a story about the power of institutions. In the mid-1980s, Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS), a local voluntary agency, assisted



villagers of Gopalpura, Alwar, in constructing three small earthen rainwater-harvesting structures (*johads*) in the dry riverbed. These small check-dams store monsoon rains, irrigate fields, and increase percolation of water to recharge wells. Due to massive deforestation, rainwater ran off too quickly, soil was washed away with it, groundwater in the area was not recharged, and virtually all wells had gone dry. By the next monsoon, the wells of the poor, drought-stricken village had water.

The idea is founded on building checkdams to catch water, protecting and regenerating forests to stop soil erosion, and assuring consensus within the community on works to be taken up. The success of these efforts has resulted in increased check-dam construction and rehabilitation. Starting with just one village in 1986, the Tarun Bharat Sangh has spread its success to more than 650 villages in Rajasthan, where 3,000 water-harvesting structures have regenerated the land. Today this area has more forests, more groundwater, and more surface water; forest cover has increased by thirty-three percent; water tables have risen by six meters on average; groundwater recharge has increased by twenty percent; and five formerly seasonal dry rivers now flow perennially. All of this is the result of only a three-percent increase in total rainwater.

The economic benefits of the initiative are highly visible. After decades of sand, heat and infertility, the basin of the Aravalli range has discovered water, prosperity and abundance. The availability of water has enhanced agricultural productivity and made it self-sustaining again. More water means better agriculture and animal husbandry: all the agricultural land of the area is under cultivation now (five times more than in 1985), milk production has increased up to 10 times and expenses on diesel for water pumps have been cut in half as the water table has risen. The result is that average annual per capita income has increased by almost \$20, and every rupee invested in checkdams has increased village production by Rupees 4.20. Besides this, the negative impacts of environmental degradation have been reversed; out-migration has been reduced; school attendance has risen; crime is down; the participation of women in village decisions has increased. There are other benefits. For the past three years it has rained poorly and the region is in the grip of a crippling drought. The river does not have much water. But the villages along the river have enough water for drinking and irrigation. The ecology of the region has become healthier with fish appearing in the water-bodies and birds returning to the regenerating forests.

However, by far the most important contribution of this activity is the development of community institutions. In fact, this is also one of the main reasons for the success and resilience of the initiative. Water harvesting is an ancient practice in much of India, particularly in the drylands of Rajasthan, but for many decades now it had been a dying practice because the institutions that had made such harvesting possible were in decay. The real miracle of Tarun Bharat Sangh is not in the infrastructure it built, nor in the environmental or economic benefits it brought about, but in the

revival and strengthening of traditional institutions of rainwater harvesting in Rajasthan. The real genius of Rajendra Singh lies in his recognition that investments in institutions, particularly community institutions, yield a far more bountiful dividend in sustainable development than do investments in infrastructure.

Investment in institutions is not easy, but it has a lasting impact. In this case, the emergence of water parliaments (*paani panchayats*) lies at the heart of the miracle. Based on the Gandhian concept of *gram swaraj* (community self-rule), the water parliament is a representative body of villages in the area served by the watercourse. In Arvari, the parliament includes 72 villages. Over the years intense participatory discourse between these villages has led to the creation of eleven major rules for cropping and water use. For example, only landless farmers are allowed to draw water directly from the river; and the cultivation of sugarcane and the raising of buffalo are banned (because they need large amounts of water). These are significant regulations, with real costs for at least some members of the community, but they have been accepted and are implemented because of the strength of the new institutions. These institutions allow a community to recognize collective benefits, which may offset the individual loss to some members. The benefits are many, but the most important one is that now there is a resilient institution that can sustain those benefits and maintain the thrust towards sustainable development.

An institution has often been described as an arrangement that can bring about a harmony between individual actions and collective interests. The term ‘institutions’ must not be confused with the term ‘organization’ (Young, 1989). While both are important, they signify different things and it is the robustness of institutions that is of most importance. Institutions represent social conventions or ‘rules of the game’; marriage is an institution, so are property rights, or democracy and participation, or the market (von Moltke, 2001b). Institutions need not necessarily have a physical existence, although they often do in the form of laws, rules and sometimes even organizations. Organizations, on the other hand, are much more circumscribed. They are material entities. They tend to have locations, physical premises, offices, employees, equipment, and the like. To invest in institutions, therefore, is to invest in social norms, values, principles and decision-making rules (Young, 1994). Unfortunately, too many programs advertised as focusing on institution building are really about building organizations. Organizations can, and often do, encourage institution building but they do not represent institutions in and of themselves. Tarun Bharat Sangh is the organization; however, it chose to invest in institutions rather than infrastructure. The institution in which they invested, and which makes this an example of sustainable development is participatory decision-making for natural resource management.

The efforts of TBS and the villagers have been called the largest mobilization of people for environmental regeneration. When people start taking care of the water, they automatically become concerned about their environment, and they start taking

care of and better managing their resources. Effective village-level institutions have allowed the massive network to be managed with the participation of as many people as possible. Each family in a village is represented in a central institution that looks after all water conservation activities of the village. Villagers participate actively in all aspects of water conservation, including bearing the costs of their activities. As of 1997-98, water conservation structures cost \$3.5 million, of which villagers contributed \$2.6 million in the form of voluntary labour and local materials. In some cases, the village has contributed eighty to ninety percent of the costs. Experts say no engineering organisation would be able to build water-harvesting structures at such low costs and that there can be no better rural investment than in *johads*.

This story, like so many others in this compilation, reminds us that individuals matter, but they matter most when they are able to translate their personal commitment, vision and charisma into institutions that are both larger and more lasting than they. An institution has often been referred to as the shadow of a great man or woman; the converse is also true: without the institution, there is no greatness. Much like the example of the OPP before it, what makes something a success in terms of sustainable development practice is not the resilience of the organizational entity involved, but of the social institution being fostered. A good example of this distinction is the role played by KENGO in the propagation of efficient cookstoves in Kenya (see Kitevu *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 80-85). As detailed in Chapter 4, the use of efficient cookstoves has now been institutionalized all over Kenya, even though KENGO as an organization is no longer operational. The distinction between institutional resilience and organizational resilience must, therefore, never be lost.

If the OPP or the TBS or the Global Barter Network or the Grameen Bank had not sought to build institutions, the work they did, however important, would have faded into insignificance. It is the institutionalization that makes them survive. More importantly, it is the institutionalization that makes them *effective*. Shoaib Sultan Khan, the founder of the South Asian Poverty Alleviation Program (SAPAP), has argued that poverty eradication was achieved successfully only when it focused on the community, and never when it focused exclusively on poverty.

## Invest in Communication

What is the first thing you would do if you were asked to design a solid waste management program for one of the most garbage-ridden cities in the world? The Arab Office for Youth and Environment (AOYE) began by talking and listening to the people who produce and live with that garbage day in and day out (see Rahmanian *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 6: 37-39). For AOYE, the communication component of their community solid waste management program was not simply a source of learning and dissemination; it was the key action component. AOYE made a huge investment in communication because they realized there was no way that they could deal with the

enormity of the problem themselves. To be at all successful, they needed a multiplier; in case after case of successful sustainable development in practice, we find that meaningful investments in communication provide that multiplier.

Egypt produces about one million tons of garbage per year. Much of this waste is never collected. What is collected has to be transported long distances, to sites that often create new environmental hazards of their own. Steps towards the privatization of garbage collection have run into various implementation problems and in many instances have made things worse. Responding to this looming crisis, the AOYE launched a participatory program in 1997 for sorting at source and the community management of solid wastes. Unlike other programs that were already operational in the country, AOYE began with the realization that waste ‘management’ was not just about what one does with waste once it is produced, it is also about what one does to minimize the production of waste and to assist in its disposal.

This transformed both the nature of the problem and the key audience for the project. The initiative was no longer about garbage collection and garbage disposal; it was now also about garbage creation. Instead of asking how to manage extremely large quantities of garbage, the problem now became how to manage the quantities of garbage being produced so that they could be dealt with effectively. This was a non-trivial transformation. Not only was AOYE adopting a ‘beginning of the pipe’ approach, it was asking a larger number of people to make small changes in their lifestyles, which together would help improve collective welfare. From this perspective, communication is not an activity for supporting action; it is itself the action.

The project began by coming to understand the garbage patterns of the communities in which it was working. Through participatory dialogues it sought the input from the community about their needs, as well as the feasibility of various approaches. It then identified an area of 3,000 households in Cairo in which to begin its activities. In each community, 16-17 people were identified to carry messages to the rest. These ‘animators’ made door-to-door visits to other residents to discuss how the garbage situation could be improved. This process of dialogue and deliberation led to a better understanding on the part of the project team, as well as within the communities of the key challenges; more than that, it created a sense of ownership and involvement in the activity.

The term ‘communication’ in this regard encompasses a number of overlapping but distinct activities. First, as is indicated in the AOYE story, it involves building a system for dialogue and consultation with and within the community. The building of community institutions rests critically on robust and open systems of communication. Second, it entails communicating the actions and expectations of the organization itself to a larger community of stakeholders. This activity is often captured under the term ‘disclosure.’ Third, bringing these two ideas together, it involves making the information about the community, as well as its relationship to

the service organization, available to the broader society. The three components are not alternatives; communication is not merely ‘dissemination’ or letting others know what we are doing, and even less so about telling them what they should do. To be meaningful, investments in communication have to be rooted first in the listening component of communication and only then in the talking component.



**Good communication lies at the core of most successful sustainable development initiatives**

Source: NRSP-P

A rather different example of the benefits of investing in communication comes from the Observatories for Sustainable Development set up in the Municipality of Manizales in Colombia (see Hurtado *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 3: 279-287). A joint initiative of the Institute for Environmental Studies of the National University of Colombia and the Municipality of Manizales, this initiative is based on the notion that information is one of the keys to sustainable development. Its success, however, comes from the fact that it has created avenues for information to be collected jointly, analyzed transparently, and communicated openly. What makes this project different from others is the major investment it has made in creating and maintaining channels of communication between key stakeholders: municipality officials, universities, professional societies, the private sector, and NGOs and community organizations. In other words, by investing in the communication and disclosure systems of the community, it has enhanced its self-governing capacity. These systems now provide the core of the community-based integrated city planning for

Manizales' Local Agenda 21. The monitoring system for sustainable development developed by the Observatories seeks to provide information and analysis in an easy-to-understand format, which can facilitate dialogue and discussion within the community on the impacts of various decisions regarding local urban management.

What is important in this initiative, and in so many other cases of sustainable development in practice, is the recognition that investing in communication can provide a critical multiplier for taking an initiative to scale.

The Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) could easily be narrated as a story about communication. In Akhter Hameed Khan's words, there were only two steps: first learning, then teaching. The OPP personnel listened diligently to the community, set up systems of structured and sustained dialogues, organized and brought to the community information about successful initiatives elsewhere, and communicated to other stakeholders – governments, donors, other NGOs and civil society organizations, and existing and future champions of sustainable development, both within and outside Pakistan – the vision and experiences of the OPP. The program published a quarterly progress report with religious commitment, showing not only what had been done but also drawing lessons from its experience on how best to bring about social transformation. Whether it is water harvesting in India, community currency in Thailand, or barter fairs in Argentina, they have made communication a central component of their work. They are all about dialogue, discussion, deliberation, and disclosure.

One is tempted to say that ultimately sustainable development is all about communication. Sustainable development is not about designing a process; it is about sustaining a dialogue. Investments in communication and deliberation are not 'support' activities but the core of the programs.

## **Invest in Partnerships**

Besides communication, the key to strong institutions is strong partnerships – bridges across various divisions that crisscross the social domain: between disciplines, agendas, interest groups, functional groups, income groups, political groups, and genders. A recurring feature of successful sustainable development practices is the attempt to overcome one or more of these divisions. Take the case of the Communal Area Management For Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) program in Zimbabwe, one of the world's best-known initiatives for community-based natural resource management, and one of the most powerful stories about building bridges between seemingly contradictory goals and forging partnerships between seemingly adversarial actors (see Mutepefa *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 2: 423-431). This process of building bridges and forging partnerships is a key characteristic shared by many of the stories that our authors consider to be exemplars of sustainable development in practice.

CAMPFIRE operates mostly in the semi-arid lowlands of rural Zimbabwe, which has a low agricultural potential and to which the majority of the indigenous Zimbabwe population were relocated under colonial rule. The program promotes natural resource utilization as an economic and sustainable land use option in the interest of both the conservation of natural resources and the relief of human poverty. Its conservation ethic holds that for local communities to appreciate the value of natural resources, there must be a deliberate policy to give them tenure of resources and benefits accruing from wise use. The rationale is simply that flora and fauna management is a cost to communities in terms of land use (opportunity cost), crop destruction, livestock predation and often, loss of human life. According to CAMPFIRE's Director, Steve Kasere, "CAMPFIRE therefore is about devolution, empowerment and co-management of indigenous resources. By devolving powers to local communities to manage their indigenous resources, CAMPFIRE not only re-unites communities with their tradition after 90 years of colonial rule, it also enables them to blend traditional knowledge systems with modern scientific skills such as aerial and ground surveys necessary to decide off-take levels for sustainable utilization of natural resources." CAMPFIRE's main principles can be summarized as follows:

Principle 1: Allow benefits accruing from wildlife and other indigenous resources to be retained by communities.

Principle 2: Producer communities must be given the full choice of how to spend their money, including both cash dividends and decisions to embark on infrastructure development projects they see fit.

Principle 3: Producer communities should be small and homogeneous.

Principle 4: Councils should involve community representatives on all key decisions (planning, project formulation, etc.), and be accountable to national government, CAMPFIRE Association and the grassroots people on all financial, ecological and social issues surrounding CAMPFIRE.

Principle 5: Marketing and engagement of Safari Operators should be based on open competition through auctions or tenders, which must be advertised.

The roots of the idea come from the awareness, on the one hand, of increasing destruction of wildlife in communal areas adjacent to protected areas, and on the other hand, of increasing benefits flowing from wildlife-based tourism and, consequently, from the awareness that unless communities have incentives to manage wildlife, the very basis of wildlife-based tourism in the protected areas would be compromised. The command and control system previously employed by the government had created an antagonistic view towards animals, which needed to change. CAMPFIRE therefore advocated the conferment of management and

ownership of the wildlife resources on the communities, thus giving them an incentive: to benefit from the proceeds generated from sustainable utilization. Another attractive feature of the CAMPFIRE philosophy was its participatory approach to management. Building on the observation that rural communities have worked as an entity through the traditional systems that bound them together, CAMPFIRE adopted a system that reinforced this approach, and thus fitted in with the traditional way of decision-making through consensus.

The CAMPFIRE program broke new ground as it ushered in a new way of viewing wildlife. Previously, communities had regarded animals as a nuisance to their crop farming and a source of meat. With CAMPFIRE they began to realize that wildlife could be the basis of an alternative source of livelihood. The communities had no history of such an approach, since environmental management had earlier been enforced only through coercion and penalties.

The breakthrough for CAMPFIRE was the 1982 amendment of the Parks and Wildlife Act, which allowed the title of ‘appropriate authority’ to be conferred on any District Council that had developed a management plan for wildlife within its area. This enabled communities to gain proprietorship over, and directly benefit from wildlife. The granting of appropriate authority status to a District Council complemented the devolution of responsibility to producer communities through another legislation, the Rural District Councils Act. According to this Act, the lowest level of management of wildlife is the Village Development Committee where the producer communities are represented. Under CAMPFIRE, communities have gone further to establish wildlife management committees comprising elected village representatives.

An enduring feature of CAMPFIRE’s success – and that of so many other sustainable development initiatives – is a commitment to investing in partnerships. CAMPFIRE not only refused to accept the development-versus-environment divide, it also ignored sectoral divisions between government, academia, business and civil society. The key collaboration partners are the communities themselves, government agencies (such as the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management and the Ministry of Local Government), academic institutions (such as the Center for Applied Social Sciences), market actors (particularly from the tourism industry), and civil society actors (such as the Zimbabwe Trust and the Worldwide Fund for Nature). The most remarkable element of CAMPFIRE’s success is, in fact, the success of this collaborative partnership. Indeed, of the many programs that have tried to imitate CAMPFIRE across Southern Africa and elsewhere, the one element that distinguishes successful programs is their ability to replicate similarly robust inter-sectoral partnerships.

In other words, CAMPFIRE completely bypassed the conventional question, “What would you rather invest in: the livelihoods of poor and marginalized



communities or the conservation of endangered species?” by showing how both could be done together.

The conceptual justification for this empirical observation is that, since sustainable development is fundamentally cross-sectoral in nature, its implementation works best where multiple actors representing multiple sectors are involved in the process and own the process. This lesson is not unique to CAMPFIRE. Perhaps the most noteworthy type of partnership that has emerged in recent years is that between the public and private sectors – Public Private Partnerships, often referred to as PPP or 3P. Take the case of Aguas Argentinas, one of the earliest examples of public private partnerships, which has a concession to supply water to Buenos Aires. Aguas Argentinas is a private sector company, whose creditworthiness was much better than the Argentine state. The initiative was made possible by a series of reforms introduced by the Argentinian government in the early 1990s. Funding was provided by the International Finance Corporation, the European Investment Bank, and the Interamerican Development Bank. The initial Buenos Aires concession, the tariff structure, did not facilitate access by the poor to water services, which led to renegotiation of the arrangements in 1999 with some success. The renegotiation included tax exemptions for construction of new lines to enable the company to lower its connection fees; and, more importantly, the participation of local communities to ensure that the arrangement would actually benefit the presumed beneficiaries.

The main lesson from public-private partnerships in water provision in the low-income areas of Buenos Aires indicates that such partnerships should involve not only government and the private sector, but also civil society. In Buenos Aires, the civil society participation consisted of groups that helped organize local residents, undertook advocacy for the project as well as the participatory practices, and served as mediators throughout the duration of the project. Benefits to the private supplier, Aguas Argentinas, were often indirect, in the form of improved public relations and reduced illegal water connections and the associated water losses and contamination. The residents benefited from the provision of better quality services – services that were not previously available – at affordable prices. The government benefited from greater authority and public support (Vilar, 2002: Vol. 3: 65-66).

However, these are, as it were, the more conventional divisions over which civic entrepreneurship has built bridges. But the goal of building bridges is more open-ended, and may involve partnerships between entirely new groups. Take the case of Morocco’s experience with rural development and integrated planning for arid areas in the Taroudannt region (see Vol. 6: 182-188). The unique feature of this initiative is the bridge it has constructed across what is literally an inter-continental divide – between the local communities and emigrants from the region.

In fact, this type of partnership is rapidly becoming one of the most dynamic

examples of sustainable development. Expatriate populations of developing countries in the industrialized world have long been recognized for the financial benefits they provide to their home countries through worker remittances as well as philanthropic activities. In recent years, however, these ‘non-resident’ populations from countries as diverse as China, Colombia, India, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, and Senegal, have begun to organize more systematic partnerships to pursue developmental goals. The role of expatriate populations in the development of their home countries has undergone several changes over the past century, from facilitating immigration, to private remittances, to public philanthropy, to building partnerships. At the start of the twentieth century, emigration – mainly from Europe to North America – was viewed simply as a means of relieving population pressure in countries of origin; emigrants provided a foothold in an unfamiliar country for other aspiring emigrants.

From the 1960s onwards, a second pattern was noted, initially amongst migrant workers in Europe – originating from North Africa, Turkey, and Yugoslavia – namely, of remittances to their families back home. This pattern was repeated at a much larger scale amongst migrant workers in the Middle East countries during the oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1980s, a third pattern emerged: organized philanthropic contribution by ‘non-resident’ populations to developmental and social activities in their countries of origin. Several voluntary organizations sprang up to mobilize financial resources for the construction of schools, hospitals, water supply, sanitation, and such infrastructure. More recently, the pattern of philanthropy has morphed into a more active form, in which the effort is not only to mobilize financial resources but also to build partnerships between expatriate and local groups, and to combine financial flows with technical, managerial, social, and even political resources.

Migrations et Développement is an example of the last-mentioned (and most evolved) form of this interaction. It is an NGO formed by Moroccan workers in France in order to begin development projects in their native region of Taroudannt. They used their international experience and exposure to forge a complex and rich set of partnerships that involved local community leaders, rural and national government agencies, development professionals from Morocco, and development volunteers from Europe. Over the decade of the 1990s, this cross-continental collaboration has produced impressive results in education, economic empowerment and income generation, water resource management and rural infrastructure development. The driving force behind these achievements is the investment in building partnerships between various stakeholders. This has not only allowed the initiative to remain relevant to the most pressing felt needs of the region but has cultivated a sense of ownership among a wide array of actors. Since sustainable development cannot be imposed from the outside, this broad sense of ownership is critical to the practice of sustainable development.

Tarouandant, one of the seven provinces in the Souss-Massa-Drâa region in Southern Morocco, is a large and sparsely populated area characterized by a high level of poverty and out-migration both towards Moroccan cities, in particular Marrakech, Casablanca and Rabat, and abroad, especially to France (the Marseilles region, the Paris region, the areas of southern Pyrenees and Northern Pas-de-Calais). The total area of 16,500 km, running from the slopes of High Atlas to the Sahara borders, consists mainly (sixty percent) of mountains or arid high plateaus, with much of the remaining forty percent occupied by the Souss Plain. The population of 760,000 is largely (seventy-seven percent) rural – although the rate of growth of the urban population is rising rapidly: from 9.1 percent per year in 1982 to 19.4 percent in 1994 and 23 percent in 2001. The climate is semi-arid, averaging 275 mm of rain per year with a highly variable pattern.

As in all arid areas, supplying drinking water represents a permanent challenge. This problem is complicated by the lack of adequate roads and electricity supply. As far as water is concerned, traditional water channels called *douars* remain the main source but have been under immense pressure from growing demands. Only thirteen percent of rural population have access to safe drinking water, which has serious repercussions on their living conditions (deterioration of hygiene and health, a heavy burden of work on women and children).

Emigrants from the region have a long history of sending remittances to their families. However, these were mainly private flows, which helped sustain the private consumption of the families of emigrants. Migrations et Developpement took a different approach. It was founded to address the weakness of public institutions rather than subsidize private consumption. Its goal was to raise money for developmental activities – in the first instance providing water – in the region. This it has done very well. To date, over 1,000 immigrants have contributed financially to various projects, which benefited more than 50,000 people. The involvement of migrants extends far beyond their traditional role as ‘providers of wealth,’ to at least three significant contributions. First, 300 immigrants have been involved directly in implementation, and consequently in the transferring of skills, technologies and culture values. Second, they also have a role of driving technical progress, and in particular to ensure that the economic, political, social, and cultural impact of the technological change is beneficial to their village. Today Migrations et Developpement tries to enlarge this transfer process through involving migrants’ wives in support actions for village women. This would have sufficed as an achievement, but in fact, the real achievement of the initiative lies in the third domain, namely building a sustainable set of institutions of collective action.

Besides helping to create an associative network in Europe and in their country of origin, Migrations et Developpement has helped establish village-level collective-action institutions as an integral component of its activities. Before action takes place, the village has to create its own association for carrying out the project,

organizing villager participation, establishing and collecting fees, managing and maintaining equipment, and collecting donations from villagers and their relatives (living locally or abroad). The village association is a democratic authority within which debates concerning the life of the village can take place; it gathers the young and the elderly, migrants and village farmers, among whom women play an increasing role. It is a tool that simultaneously integrates traditional knowledge, 'imported' techniques, ideas conveyed by immigrants, and the dynamism of the youth. More than 150 local associations now constitute a network for integrated rural development, and benefit from management-training workshops organized by Migrations et Developpement. Between 1989 and 1994, seven village associations were created. In 1994 these were united into a federative structure with an associative status, which expanded to more than sixty associations by 1997.

In short, Migrations et Developpement strives for the reinforcement of the local associative fabric, the raising of funds necessary to carry out development projects, and the mobilization of different actors (government, rural communities, ministries, and village associations) around the priorities of local development. The whole of the work undertaken with the villagers has especially contributed to the reinforcement of their capacities for collective initiative, starting with village associations then, around these projects creating new types of partnerships with the state administrations, extension services, rural municipalities and regional authorities. Migrations et Developpement strives to involve all development actors and to maintain linkages between them.

As elsewhere, there are many lessons to be inferred from these stories. One that needs to be reinforced is that success in the pursuit of sustainable development requires investment in institutions, and successful institution building requires the building of partnerships, placing bridges across divisions that may have appeared to be impassable. Indeed, this is the essence of *civic* entrepreneurship. While the private entrepreneur builds an organization in order to produce and market his or her idea, the civic entrepreneur has to build coalitions, alliances and partnerships. The great sociologist, Antonio Gramsci (1994) described leadership as having two facets: the ability to forge a coalition and the ability to build alliances with those outside the coalition. The examples we have provided here show how the champions of sustainable development demonstrated precisely such qualities of leadership by building coalitions and alliances. They brought together people with a commitment to the seemingly competing agendas of conservation and development; they built alliances between groups whose interests and perspectives could not be more diverse – the state, the private sector, and civil society – and they have put virtual bridges across oceans and deserts to overcome enormous geographical barriers. In the future as well, prospective champions of sustainable development will need to remember that the foremost task of the civic entrepreneur is to build these partnerships.

## Invest in a Supporting Environment

In the early days of the development literature, a leading theory was that of balanced growth, in which the government was supposed to ensure that investment was taking place in the right sectors and at appropriate levels. This was inspired in part by the experience of the Soviet Union in directing the process of growth through central planning. Albert Hirschman (1958) was one of the most influential economists to challenge this view and bring about an almost complete reversal in thinking. His main argument, which he titled ‘Unbalanced Growth,’ was that economic development takes place through the problem-solving actions of decentralized economic actors (including investors and entrepreneurs) and not through a centralized allocation mechanism adopted by the state. Over time, this view has prevailed, and virtually the entire mainstream of development thinking has moved away from the centralized approaches implicit in the balanced growth approach. In this regard, the role of the state has increasingly been characterized as that of providing an enabling environment within which the investors and entrepreneurs would be able to function effectively.

However, the approach to sustainable development has somehow become mired in the history of the earlier disagreement. On the one hand, some scholars and academics view it as the last bastion of balanced growth – a domain in which the centralized planning approach would find a home. On the other hand, market theorists believe that the ‘invisible hand’ will solve the problems, and government has only to make sure that policies do not interfere with market signals. The experience of the previous decade, however, tells a different story. In this story, although the role of the government is akin to that advanced by market theorists, the enabling environment needs to be created not solely for private sector activities, but far more importantly for civic entrepreneurs. The recent record is replete with examples of how far-seeing policy makers were able to create precisely such an enabling environment. The earliest and most well-cited example of such an environment is the change in forestry legislation.

Traditional forest management in developing countries relied either on private sector management subject to governmental concessions – as in much of Latin America – or government management even of forests that were in principle owned by individuals or communities. In India, for example, the colonial government established an elaborate forest management department, whose task was to control the harvesting and use of forest products in ‘reserve’ and ‘protected’ forests, while allowing communities to control areas that fell outside these categories. By the 1970s, it had become clear that this system was not functioning properly. The level of deforestation had reached alarming proportions, and the quality of the remaining forests had degenerated significantly (Guha, 1990). Without using these words, the new thinking about forests had begun to revolve around the notion of community management under the leadership and vision of civic entrepreneurs.

In line with this new thinking, the government of India introduced a new forest policy in 1988. In order to change the relationship with local communities from one of adversarial antagonism to one of cooperation and collaborative management, the new policy broadened the notion of forests. Instead of viewing it exclusively as a resource for industrial and commercial use, it sought to describe it as an integrated resource that also provided ecological services and habitat as well as livelihoods to local populations. In other words, it recognized that the meeting of the basic needs of people living in the forests was a major goal of the policy. It sought to shift the emphasis from enforcement to empowerment. The policy was a major experiment. It was based on a key, albeit tacit, assumption: that the empowerment of forest communities would create fertile conditions for the emergence of civil will and civic entrepreneurship, and that this would be more successful in managing forests.

While the success of the policy depended on the minutiae of implementation, one of the most successful examples is that of the state of Andhra Pradesh (Haldar *et al.*, 2002: Vol. 4: 254-257.) Andhra Pradesh is a large state on the eastern coast of India, with a severely depleted forest resource base. Forest area had shrunk to only 0.07 hectares per capita, one of the lowest proportions in the world. For the villagers, mere existence was at stake and there was no assured reliance on these natural assets. Building on the 1988 forest policy of the government of India, the state government of Andhra Pradesh introduced the shift towards joint forest management. Under this system, communities were encouraged to form local organizations, called Vana Samrakshna Samithi (VSS), to protect forests. “The primary purpose of the VSS is to protect the forest from encroachment, grazing, theft, and fire, and to improve the forest in accordance with an approved joint forest management plan.” In the beginning, considerable effort was needed to convince people of the value of the new program, but with time citizens began to demand the extension of the program to their villages. “The Forestry Department is responsible for organising and providing technical and administrative support to the VSS.” Between 1994 and 1998 5,000 VSS organizations had been established and communities had become effective partners in forest management. Although the investment in an enabling environment is not an easy task, when successful it yields a rich dividend.

The success of the policy in Andhra Pradesh derives largely from the commitment of the state government in implementing it properly. The state government began by reviewing the structure of its own forest bureaucracy to see how it fit the requirements of the new policy. Finding that it did not, it launched a process of redesigning and streamlining the forest administration to make it more responsive to the needs of local communities and the goals of the new policy. These actions not only won the trust and respect of the local communities but also fostered an enabling environment in which civic entrepreneurship could flourish. As a result, today the local communities are full partners in forest management, rather than the subjects of forest enforcement.

However, the Andhra Pradesh programme differs in several key aspects from other, less successful initiatives. The program is funded from many sources: besides the 1,665 villages funded directly by the project, VSS have been formed in an additional 4,606 villages. Funding is also provided from the poverty-alleviation budget of the Rural Development Department, which has enabled the state to scale up the efforts of the project.

Because of the vertically integrated training programs and continuity of leadership, the state forest department, right down to the lowest levels of the hierarchy, has exhibited a strong commitment to participatory methods.

There is a strong emphasis on involving other civil society actors, including the news media as well as eight hundred NGOs.

Funding procedures have been streamlined. Project funds are transferred directly to the VSS, increasing their sense of ownership. The VSS get one hundred percent of the incremental production of timber, of which they are required to invest one-half in the village fund, thus ensuring sustainability. Finally, the VSS have the power to dispose of timber and bamboo in the open market through auction.

Political commitment to building community participation is strong in the state. Leaders seek political mileage by vigorously pursuing the agenda of building local communities and decentralization.

Many of the cases described in these volumes did not find as fertile ground for their operation as the Andhra Pradesh Joint Forest Management Program. However, and this is the second lesson that can be drawn from these experiences, the success of the civic entrepreneurs often became the trigger for nudging the government towards creating an enabling environment for similar initiatives by others. The Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in Pakistan started its work under conditions that were unfriendly if not hostile, but with time, the success of the program induced government agencies to change their approach. Similarly, the CAMPFIRE program in Zimbabwe actually succeeded in having the laws of the country revised so that initiatives for community-based resource management could operate under more congenial conditions.

Although policy discussion of sustainable development is preoccupied with mobilizing financial resources, it is far more important and far less expensive to concentrate on creating conditions for the flourishing of civil will. As in the case of economic development, sustainable development will take place through the problem-solving activities of decentralized actors. The state needs to make sure that civic entrepreneurs do not need to expend the bulk of their resources and energy in addressing structural and other impediments placed in their way by existing policy choices. Where these impediments have already been removed, their energies can be

much more fruitfully channeled towards the main objective. Policy makers need to ensure that the policy environment is conducive to the creation of civil will and civic entrepreneurship; money is certainly important in this regard but it is not the only way. Removing policy hurdles that could stifle civic entrepreneurship is an equally and often far more important option.

## Investment in Imitation

We started this volume with a quote from Hannah Arendt, who contrasts the philosophy of judgment with the Platonic emphasis on deduction. She writes, “When someone said to Socrates that Hector was courageous, he said ‘define courage.’ [He should have said] ‘Tell me Hector’s story’.” Instead of trying to define the elusive concept of sustainable development, we have sought to approach it through the story of sustainable development, rather, the stories of the practitioners of sustainable development. In this regard, we have underscored the importance of leadership, vision, institutions, communication, partnerships, and the policy environment. However, perhaps none of these are as important as what we have saved for the last: imitation.

Imitation is not only the sincerest form of flattery it is also the most effective path to progress. All the stories we have told in this collection involve a degree of imitation. Scratch the surface of any success story of sustainable development and you will find traces of many that have gone before. Some debts are acknowledged publicly, others may remain in the background, but their influence is visible nevertheless. None of the champions of sustainable development thought up his or her contribution from scratch. Whether consciously or unconsciously, all of them were active imitators. Akhter Hameed Khan says that he borrowed his ideas from the nineteenth-century cooperatives movement in Germany; Shoaib Sultan Khan repeatedly acknowledged his debt to Akhter Hameed Khan. Muhammad Yunas lent money to poor women, but he borrowed the idea of collective action from the Comilla and other experiments that had made this a well-trodden road. In turn, Yunas’s innovation of micro credit became a growth industry after he made it easy for others to imitate his work. The list can go on.

However, as in the Urdu saying, even imitation requires intelligence. The word imitation is not used here to mean mindless repetition. It is used to mean adapting an idea to one’s own context and situation. Conversely, it also implies that ideas have a life beyond the particular activity in which they are embedded. The same idea appears and reappears in a myriad of forms. A brilliant metaphor proffered by Milan Kundera (1991) provides an insight into this idea. Kundera says that while the number of features and characteristics by which we distinguish human beings – the cut of the face, the shape of the nose, a particular gesture – is finite, the number of humans is, if not infinite, certainly very, very large; and so by the sheer logic of the math, every feature and characteristic will get repeated again and again. The same may be said of the practice of sustainable development. The number of stories is



potentially infinite; but the number of features and characteristics described here is quite concise, and each feature gets repeated in various combinations with others. In many cases, we have found this to happen explicitly, in others unconsciously, or at least without acknowledgment. In some cases, it is like a stream that goes underground temporarily, to re-emerge in another form some years later.

Take the case of the Guinea worm eradication initiative in Igbo-Elerin, Nigeria (see Okali, 2002: Vol. 2: 226-228). In 1957 Akin Adejumo founded and became the first principal of the secondary school that served the thirty-five villages of the Igbo-Elerin community, near Ibadan, Nigeria. While opening a school is in itself an investment in sustainable development, this particular school and this particular schoolteacher was to make a more profound impact on the sustainable development of his community. In the early 1960s when a Guinea worm infestation ravaged the area, Adejumo realized that he had a responsibility to be a teacher not only to the children of the community but to the community itself; indeed, he decided that it was time for the children to start teaching their parents.

A long-time resident of the community and a seasoned practitioner of rain-water harvesting, Adejumo understood that guinea worm infestation came from the shallow ponds that were the main source of water for the village and that the way to get rid of the menace and the health toll it was taking on his students and their families was to find a cleaner source of water. With the support of the local church and community leaders and the participation of his students, he set up a rainwater harvesting system within the school. This water was used for consumption within the school and students were encouraged to take the collected rainwater home with them for household use. Within a year, all students in the school were free of guinea worms and so were their families. The lesson being inculcated to the students and their families was not just about public health, it was about community participation.

Subsequent principals of the school carried on the tradition of rainwater harvesting at the school. However, in the early-1980s the tradition began to be neglected once again and soon the rainwater harvesting structures built by Akin Adejumo and his students began to decay. The result was a resurgence of Guinea worm infection in the early 1980s. However, unlike many neighboring communities where such Guinea worm infestations led to panic, in Igbo-Elerin it turned into a call for actions. Many of Adejumo's students remembered their lessons well and they began organizing the community to rehabilitate and expand the system of water harvesting to meet the needs of the entire community. Having already seen the benefits of water harvesting, the community rallied to the call and contributed money to revamp the water harvesting structures and augment them with drilled boreholes. More than that, they understood that key investments would need to be made in the maintenance and management of these water-harvesting systems. Traditional community structures that already existed were given the responsibility of regularly monitoring the quality of water in the bore-well as well as the rainwater collection structures and managing a

program of regular upkeep. These structures now serve not only the school but also the twenty-two villages around it. Guinea worm was entirely eradicated in these villages even though it persisted in adjoining areas that were still using shallow ponds as their source of water. Importantly, in requiring persistent community involvement and management, this initiative strengthened existing community groups and gave them the confidence to begin other community development initiatives.

Many of the stories collected here have this type of a message. We have already narrated the story of KENGO, an alliance of energy-related NGOs in Kenya, who popularized fuel-efficient cookstoves in the country (see Kitevu, 2002: Vol. 2: 80-85). Even when KENGO disappeared from the scene, the work was taken up by other organizations. In physics, there is a concept called ‘hysteresis,’ which means for example that if you stretch a metal wire by applying a weight to it; the metal will ‘remember’ this experience even after the weight is removed. Even when the stream disappears, the land remembers that there was once such a stream and occasionally, when it is needed again, conjures it up, often in a new and improved form.

External programs, whether implemented by donors, government agencies or NGOs, have definite timelines. They start at particular dates and end at particular dates. Sustainable development in practice does not have start or end dates. It becomes a success not when it happens but when it becomes self-replicating and self-perpetuating. The power of Akin Adejumo’s story is that it is not just Akin Adejumo’s story. It is the story of all those who followed him and who passed on his sense of civil will from one hand to another, and one generation to another much like in a relay race.



**Urban communities all around the world have been able to imitate each other's successes**

Source: Peace Corps

In describing modernity, Hannah Arendt (1968) makes a crucial distinction between ‘fabrication’ and ‘action.’ By fabrication she means producing a finished product, whose value can be used as a guide to assess the value of the input that went into its production. The industrial revolution, according to Arendt, introduced a way of thinking in which the basic framework was that of fabrication. This framework led into a consequentialist approach to ethics, in which activities were to be judged on the basis of their outcomes, under the assumption that outcomes could be determined in advance. But the modern world, according to Arendt, is the world of action. Action means setting processes into motion, processes over which one has no control; it is very different from fabrication: more open-ended and, by that token, more dangerous, more full of possibilities.

As hinted at in the metaphor of the house, the traditional approach to sustainable development is rooted in the framework of fabrication. Sustainable development is the outcome; the outcome is projected in advance; and policies are identified for producing the requisite outcome. The approach that emerges from the studies and analyses included in these volumes is rooted in the framework of action, of setting process into motion, of sowing seeds of hope, of building upon the past, and envisioning the future, not as a determined outcome but as a lure, a promise and a commitment. This future is not to be realized through mechanistic policies. It requires a different process of evolution, a different process of reproduction, and a different process of change.

Civil will is infectious. Indeed, it works best where it is most infectious. The stories of Akhter Hameed Khan with the Orangi Pilot Project in Pakistan, of Rajendra Singh with the Tarun Bharat Sangh in India, of Carlos De Sanzo, Horacio Ravelo and Ruben Ravelo with the Global Barter Network in Argentina, of Muhammad Yunas of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, of Akin Adejumo of the Guinea worm project in Nigeria are inspiring because they inspired others into action. The process of evolution and progress revealed through these stories is based not on mechanistic rules but on creative adaptation. Imitation is the analog of seeding, the process through which nature finds its way.

It is often said that most successful civil society leaders have charisma. They do. But charisma counts only when it is infectious. It translates into sustainable development only when it transforms the will of one person into the hope of entire communities. Many of the people described here have charisma to spare, but we celebrate them not for their charisma but for their example. Each reminds us that civic entrepreneurship is not just about investing in sustainable development; it is investing for the long term.

The final lesson that we wish to proffer in this volume is addressed to every stakeholder – the policy maker, the donor, the scholar, the consultant, the educator, the activist, and the present and prospective champion of sustainable development –

and the lesson is very simple: imitate, imitate, and imitate; make it easy for others to imitate; learn from others; teach what you learn, and prepare the ground for those who will follow.

There is much in these pages that will provide food for thought for the advocates of sustainable development. There is much to learn and much to imitate.

# Chapter 6:

# Realizing Sustainable Development

*It is the nature of acting that we are not to see this woman as Ophelia but Ophelia as this woman.*

– George Bernard Shaw

This is a book about stories. Stories of how civic entrepreneurs advance sustainable development in practice. The moral of our stories is that progress has largely come from civic entrepreneurs, either directly or indirectly. Champions of sustainable development within civil society, government and business have been able to build successful initiatives by drawing upon their reservoirs of civil will in pushing, pulling and creating new spaces for change and innovation. The stories we have collected highlight how civic entrepreneurs ‘will’ change in policies and market practices, how civil will can be recognized even where it cannot be precisely defined, and how civil entrepreneurs invest in civil will to advance the practice of sustainable development.

The question that motivates this final chapter is: What can be done to encourage civic entrepreneurs and generate more civil will? While the previous chapter looked in detail at the investments that civic entrepreneurs make in advancing sustainable development in practice, the goal of this chapter is to identify investments that donors, policymakers and researchers can make in encouraging more civic entrepreneurship. Business entrepreneurs require a particular type of investment, which is prone to high risk but has the potential of high rewards and is often made by venture capitalists. Similarly, civic entrepreneurs can be nurtured by investments that fertilize the civil will on which they thrive. However, just as the utility of venture investments do not undermine the need and utility of general market investments, investments in civic entrepreneurs must not come at the cost of broader investments in social processes and civil society.

As everywhere else in this book, we seek our inspiration as well as our examples from that which is already happening and working. We propose that the worlds of development assistance, public policy and scholarship can build on what they are already doing in four key areas: listening to, learning from, propagating and nurturing civic entrepreneurs.



**Ultimately, we are the stories that we tell**

Source: NRSP-P

## **Listen**

Probably the most important investment that can be made in civic entrepreneurs is to listen to their stories. The purpose of providing civic entrepreneurs with a voice and a stage is not only so that we can hear them narrate their stories but so that they can unleash the unheard stories of others. The purpose of listening to civic entrepreneurs is greater than just learning from them; that is important, too, and will be discussed in the next section. To listen to their stories is to allow them the opportunity to change the discourse. While explanations are important, the purpose of encouraging narrative is more than just explanation. The goal of listening to civic entrepreneurs is to invite them to help us rethink that which we think we know.

One of the most important legacies of Rio was that it provided and expanded the space

in which civil society could narrate their stories. In the last ten years, civic entrepreneurs have built upon this success and pushed open new arenas for narration. For example, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has made their Civil Society Forum more open and inclusive. Civil society is also amply visible at the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and various MEA negotiations. With much more hesitation, institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and regional development banks have been forced to create forums in which civil society can participate. Similar, and sometimes similarly formalized, forums for interaction with civil society have been developed at the national level, where a multitude of mechanisms are now in place for ‘engaging’ civil society. The quality of this engagement, however, is quite variable and ranges from what can be described as a discourse of the deaf – where different actors simply talk past each other – to genuine attempts at building partnerships. Unfortunately, the balance is tilted towards the former. At a minimum, shifting this balance would be a good thing.

While a major reason why those in the worlds of development assistance, policy advice and scholarship should be listening to civic entrepreneurs is to find new partners for sustainable development, this is not the only purpose. Market investors spend a great deal of time listening to a great many business entrepreneurs not only to seek new investment opportunities but also, and sometimes even more so, because entrepreneurs can provide them with a pulse on market sentiments and trends that they are incapable of obtaining simply from aggregate indices of market performance. By a similar token, civic entrepreneurs are sensitive to ground realities that donors, policymakers and scholars will not be able to get merely from aggregate indices of development or the environment. To listen to civic entrepreneurs, then, is an investment that can lead to important dividends: new and better agendas for development assistance, policy and scholarship. Indeed, as previous chapters and the accompanying volumes have detailed, this is a key mechanism by which civic entrepreneurs have expanded and created new spaces for sustainable development policy and action. To listen to civic entrepreneurs, then, is not only to invest in their voice; it is to invest in our own wisdom.

While opportunities for listening to civic entrepreneurs already exist and have been significantly expanded in recent years, much of the wisdom of the discourse can be lost if the dialogue is reduced to mere monologues being thrust at each other or, equally bad, turns into ‘babblefests.’ Building on recent research (Banuri and Spanger-Siegfried, 2000) and the suggestions of our consultations with over 200 civil-society organizations around the world, we can identify the following practical measures that can be taken to encourage meaningful engagement with civil society with a clear focus on encouraging civic entrepreneurs engaged in or willing to be engaged in the practice of sustainable development:

**Create legitimate expectations.** While many – sometimes too many – meetings, seminars, workshops and jamborees are now held routinely which bring civil

society actors together with donors, policymakers and scholars tend to come to these meetings with very different, and often unrealistic, expectations. Our collaborators from all over the world stress the need to make the expectations realistic on all sides and base these on the legitimate interests and abilities of various actors. For example, many civil society participants are given the impression – which may not be wrong – that their presence at global events such as the Civil Society Forums organized by UNEP in conjunction with its Governing Council meetings, is merely to showcase UNEP initiatives to civil society participants. Such an impression does not encourage civil society participants to tell *their* stories; indeed, it can militate against that. It is also quite evident that those who view their participation in such an event as a once-off opportunity tend to be far less invested in it than those who view it as one step in a longer relationship. Those who seek to listen to and talk with civil society entrepreneurs need to make explicit that this is what they wish to do and structure their events to do exactly that. This can be done through better thought-out and clearly defined institutional, informational, financial and programmatic arrangements.

**Improve institutional arrangements.** Engagement with civil society organizations tends to be structured around ad hoc means of identifying partners. Creating mechanisms by which a wider but more predictable net can be cast, in terms of civil society engagement, can assist in better listening. In focusing particularly on how UNEP could improve its engagement with civil society, for example, the authors of the country and regional reports suggest that formal involvement of civil society representatives in UNEP's governing structures would be a good idea, which would be facilitated by steps such as clearer and easier accreditation procedures, predictability in the schedule of events, increased roles and responsibilities with UNEP activities, and the establishment of country nodes of UNEP for dealing with civil society organizations. Other institutions and actors might need to take different steps in improving the institutional arrangements for civil society participation, but each should think seriously and define explicitly what the goal of such interaction is and how it can be most productive to all sides, including to civil society representatives.

**Improve channels of information.** Misinformation breeds misapprehension. Open and accessible channels of information are a key element of the enabling environment that is a precondition for meaningful dialogue with civil society champions of sustainable development. International institutions, in particular, tend to generate a wealth of information that never reaches civic entrepreneurs simply because there are no clear mechanisms for transmitting that information. For example, the *Global Environmental Outlook* (GEO) reports, UNEP's flagship publications, are a treasure trove of information, but like so many other useful publications – including, for example, the *World Resources* reports, which are also sponsored by UNEP, and the *Human Development Reports*, sponsored by the UNDP



– they usually do not reach civic entrepreneurs. This is unfortunate, not only because civic entrepreneurs would find these publications of great interest, but also because their comments and inputs could make these publications better. The authors of the country and regional studies suggest a number of mechanisms for improving the flow of information, including creating sub-regional information networks, supporting national knowledge-sharing networks (including those that link local communities with regional and national civil society) and creating easier-to-use distribution systems for publications of international organizations.

**Support financial initiatives.** Listening takes time and, therefore, resources. Funders of sustainable development tend to be so concerned about ‘deliverables’ that they sometimes tune out what are, in fact, the most important products being offered by civic entrepreneurs: their stories. The problem, of course, is that narrowly defined ‘deliverables’ are unlikely to deliver simply because sustainable development has to be redefined in every particular instance of its practice. To return to our earlier metaphor, sustainable development is not like a building that can be ‘delivered’ according to a predetermined blueprint nor like a river that has a determined and determinable logic of flow. It is far more like the tree that will grow organically and grow best where it is given the freedom to grow in accordance with and in coexistence with its surroundings. Just like a good gardener invests in giving the sapling the freedom to find its best form, investors in sustainable development need to give civic entrepreneurs the incentives to explore their ideas. In the context of listening, this implies investing in forums and networks where civic entrepreneurs can listen to each other’s stories and share their experiences.



**Well before we learn, we must listen**

Source: NRSP-P

Although the above advice is necessarily generic, the point to be made is that those who wish to invest in sustainable development by investing in civic entrepreneurs should invest in forums where they can give voice to their experience and invest that point in expressing and expanding society's civil will, which is the ultimate driver of change for sustainable development. A number of such forums already exist, but nearly all can be improved in terms of creating better spaces where we can move from the mere recounting of experience to the reshaping of action.

## Learn

Learning comes from listening. However, it comes also from pondering upon that which we hear and, of course, see. Investments in learning begin with listening but then move towards documenting, analyzing and ultimately (one hopes) understanding. "Instead of placing one body of knowledge against another, storytellers invite us to return from knowledge to thinking (Carse, 1986)." Investments in learning are investments not merely in knowledge about what happened, they are investments in thought about why it happened.

A tremendous amount of work has been done towards defining, measuring, redefining and recalibrating sustainable development. However, as we have suggested elsewhere in this book, sustainable development is a 'constructive ambiguity' that loses much of what is constructive about it but none of its ambiguity when we place it within definitional straightjackets. This is not to suggest that it is a concept without meaning; far from it, it is entirely recognizable. Beyond the points already made in Chapter 4, three points can be made about the concept here. First, to the extent that the concept is necessarily ambiguous, the question is how to use the ambiguity constructively and without allowing it to recede to the level of a meaningless label. Second, despite what may appear as a lack of precision, there is a consensus, namely, that sustainable development involves some balance between three key components: social justice, ecological integrity and economic development. Third, there is also a generally recognized sense of what sustainable development is *not*. Between these three, it is possible to identify processes that characterize movement towards sustainable development and those that do not. The problem with much of the learning on sustainable development has been that, instead of starting from that which is before us, most of the literature has started from an effort to define that which could be. Those who seek to seed civil will and invest in civic enterprise need to invest in a new type of learning, learning that emanates not from abstract goals but from the actions of those who have tried to put sustainable development into practice.

Our compilation of stories of sustainable development in practice constitutes a preliminary step. Many raised disagreements whether or not they should be included. Of interest to us, however, are not the minutiae of the stories but the fact that someone chooses to tell it when asked what constitutes a possible example of

sustainable development. This is a different approach to arriving at an understanding of what people consider to be sustainable development. In asking for investments in learning, it is such learning that we consider the most important.

Although we have collected over a hundred detailed stories about what constitutes sustainable development, this is only a drop in the ocean. An even wider net needs to be cast and a different approach cultivated in order to learn about what sustainable development is and how it works. Some useful avenues for structuring and showcasing such learning already exist. The first that comes to mind is the aforementioned *Global Environmental Outlook* reports from UNEP. These reports, particularly the most recent one, have already done remarkable work in recognizing the importance of civil society in sustainable development practice. This is at the root of the global scenarios around which the latest GEO report (UNEP, 2002) is based, especially the Great Transformations scenario, which envisages change being triggered largely through mechanisms such as those discussed here. Indeed, one could argue that the findings of this book validate the potency of the Great transformation scenario. Subsequent GEO reports would be an ideal mechanism to take this work forward by focusing particularly on the stories of how some great transformations have already begun happening. This book lists a number of such stories. However, a wealth of stories has yet to be told.

Other global reports that deal with issues related to sustainable development – including, for example, the UNDP’s *Human Development Reports* – could also become avenues for commissioning and showcasing such learning-from-doing. Furthermore, investments in learning about what civic entrepreneurs do and how civil will works need to be made by many other actors. For example, scholars of business and particularly of business entrepreneurship do much of their research through case studies of business practice and then devise general principles and lessons from that practice. Scholars of sustainable development will do a great service to their subject if they begin looking at the practice of sustainable development in a similar manner. Governments and NGOs themselves are also significant repositories of research and need to re-orient their enquiries towards documenting cases of sustainable development in practice. Just as business scholars dealt with the complexity of business practice by documenting the practice rather than getting bogged down in the complexity *per se*, those who wish to learn about sustainable development will be well advised to start from the practice of sustainable development rather than the complexities of its definition.

## Propagate

John Carse (1986) points out that, “Great stories have this feature: To listen to them and learn from them is to become their narrator.” An extremely powerful way to invest in civil will is simply to narrate the story of civic entrepreneurs. This book and its accompanying volumes are exactly such an investment.

Trees, as we have already noted, are unlike buildings and rivers because they do not grow simply by becoming bigger and taller, they grow by propagating themselves into a thousand other trees like themselves – sometimes even forests. Those who wish to invest in civic entrepreneurship must follow the example of Johnny Appleseed and propagate the seeds of civil will as far and wide as possible. Recalling our earlier discussion about imitation, if sustainable development scales out through processes of adaptive imitation, then imitation is accelerated by repetition. That which is good and that which has worked needs to be celebrated and needs to be propagated so that it is repeated.

In searching for vehicles for such propagation the most obvious are capacity-building programs, which are already a growth industry since Rio. This has certainly led to a number of benefits, but there is a growing concern that the programs have become routinized and build the capacities of organizers more than those of the supposed beneficiaries. More problematically, there is discomfort about exactly which capacities need to be built and for whom. Re-orienting capacity-building and training programs to focus on the case studies of civic entrepreneurs would be a great way of propagating the seeds; this will also revitalize the programs and make them vehicles for imparting useful knowledge and experience, rather than academic concepts or mechanistic tools.

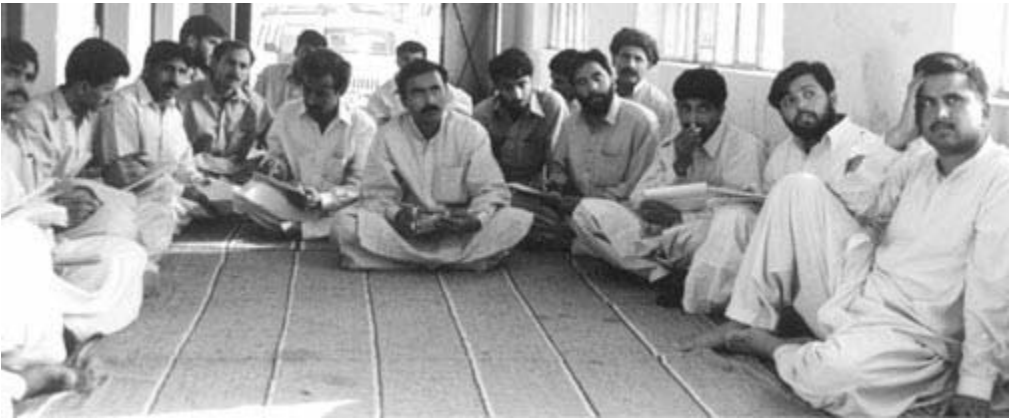
Propagation of the stories of civic entrepreneurship has to build upon investments in learning about them. For example, preparation of well-researched case studies about civic entrepreneurship, as discussed above, could help propagate the experience through capacity-building and training programs, including university programs on sustainable development. In the business world, the case studies of successful entrepreneurs tend to become best sellers and thus propagate the experience and lessons of these entrepreneurs. Imitation happens not because of conceptual breakthroughs but because of experiential breakthroughs. Investments in propagation seek to highlight experiential breakthroughs, which in turn spur imitation and adaptation. Investments in programs that propagate the stories of sustainable development are, in fact, investments in scaling out that success.

## **Nurture**

Investments in listening to, learning from, and propagating the stories of civic entrepreneurs all seek to strengthen and expand civil will. Ultimately, however, the storyteller is as important as the story; it is the genius of the storyteller that stimulates the genius in the listener. One must, therefore, invest in the storytellers themselves. “One does not bring change to a garden but comes to a garden prepared for change and, therefore, prepared to change (Carse, 1986).” To nurture the champions of sustainable development, one must invest in civic entrepreneurs in the same spirit.

In the world of business, new and innovative companies can receive capital inflows from two different sources – venture capitalists who invest in the ideas behind the company, and clients who contract the company to provide goods and services. Both investments are important for the vitality of the company, although ultimately the regularity of the latter may be more important. However, the two investments are qualitatively very different and lead to different activities in the company. Venture capitalists invest in ideas, in people, in experimentation, in boldness and, ultimately, in change. Clients invest in predictability and deliverability. There are, indeed, many goods and services that civil society can provide where it has a competitive advantage in terms of predictability and deliverability. In these areas more contract investment is needed. However, civic entrepreneurs also need to be nurtured through the civic equivalents of venture capitalists.

Much as Agha Hasan Abedi invested in Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan rather than in the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi, Pakistan (Qadir, 2002: Vol. 4: 45-50), civic investing needs to search for civic entrepreneurs and latent civil will rather than deliverable products and services. The purpose of designing programs and projects to listen to, learn from and propagate the stories of successful civic entrepreneurs is to encourage others to become civic entrepreneurs themselves; these programs will work best where they are complemented by programs that actually invest in nurturing the work of civic entrepreneurs. At least a certain sub-set of donors need to become the equivalents of venture capitalists for sustainable development.



**Listen. Learn. Propagate. Nurture**

Source: NRSP-P

Although there is some interesting work on civic philanthropy and civic investing in industrialized economies (Harwood Group, n.d.; Bruyn, 2000), the discussion needs to be expanded to identify the dynamics of social enterprise and civic investment in the developing world. There is a need to understand how civic entrepreneurs can be nurtured and how their civil will can be made the basis of provisioning them with venture capital. Those who wish to invest in change must start by investing in the

champions of change. International organizations may also begin to recognize that supporting change is a risky business but one that must be invested in despite the risks, because the potential rewards are so high.

In searching for practical measures to invest in civic entrepreneurs, we can learn much from the emerging literature on business ‘incubators’ (Hansen *et al.*, 2000). In the business world incubators are becoming a powerful vehicle for encouraging the spirit of entrepreneurship in high-risk and potentially high-reward areas by providing an alternative to traditional venture financing. Incubators provide services such as office space, coaching, seed funding, information technology, public relations, recruiting, legal advice, accounting services, pooled buying programs and organized networking to budding entrepreneurs and therefore can enter the process at a level before the entrepreneur ‘matures’ for the venture capitalist. More importantly, incubators nurture entrepreneurs by investing not only in their ideas but also in their development. They encourage new entrepreneurs and, because of their structure, can invest in more of them than regular venture capitalists. The stories of civic enterprise we have collected suggest that the incubator model has much to offer to civic investors. Incubators can serve as networks of support and encouragement for tomorrow’s generation of civic entrepreneurs. There is much that needs to be learned from this model and how it can be adapted to the task of nurturing civic entrepreneurs and civil will.

## What Next?

Unlike the rest of the book, this final chapter has not been about civic entrepreneurs but about those who wish to strengthen and expand the civil will for sustainable development by investing in civic entrepreneurs. The champions of change must derive their strength from the constituencies of change. The constituency for change is, in fact, quite broad. At the core of this constituency are the communities and individuals who are both the demanders and motors of change. But along with them stand those within governments, the business community, civil society and international organizations who seek alternative paths to sustainable development; those who recognize that civil will is a prerequisite for societal change and are willing to invest in strengthening and expanding civil will. This support group of ‘investors’ must become the new venture capitalists to sustainable development. Civic entrepreneurs will thrive when investments are made in them, their visions and their work. In this final chapter we have identified four key ways in which the hand of civic entrepreneurs can be strengthened: by listening to them, by learning from them, by propagating their work and by nurturing their actions. Each of these areas requires more thought, more analysis and more investment. Between them, these four areas must define the post-Johannesburg agenda for investing in sustainable development.

## Annex 1 List of project participants and contact information

| Project Partner Organization                                          | Contact Information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS)                          | P.O. Box 46917, Nairobi, Kenya<br>Tel: 254-2 524000/524700 Fax: 254-2 522987/524001<br>Website: <a href="http://www.acts.or.ke/">http://www.acts.or.ke/</a> Email: <a href="mailto:acts@act.or.ke">acts@act.or.ke</a>                                                                                                            |
| Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) | Asian NGO Coalition # 5-B Manlag St.<br>U.P. Village, Diliman Quezon City, Philippines                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS)                         | House 23 Road 10A Dhanmondi, Dhaka, Bangladesh<br>Tel: 880-2 9119823/9113682, 8115829 Fax: 880-2 8111344<br>Website: <a href="http://www.bcas.net">http://www.bcas.net</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@bcas.net">info@bcas.net</a>                                                                                               |
| Centro de Investigación y Planificación del Medio Ambiente (CIPMA)    | Bucarest 048-D Providencia, Santiago, Chile<br>Tel: 56-2-334-1091/-466-2-334-1096 Fax: 56-2-334-1095<br>Website: <a href="http://www.cipma.cl">http://www.cipma.cl</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@cipma.cl">info@cipma.cl</a>                                                                                                   |
| Development Alternatives (DA)                                         | B-32, Tara Crescent, Outab Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110018<br>Tel: 91-11-685-1158 696-7938 Fax: 91-11-686-6031<br>Website: <a href="http://www.devait.org">http://www.devait.org</a> Email: <a href="mailto:tara@sdait.emet.in">tara@sdait.emet.in</a>                                                                    |
| Earth Council (EC)                                                    | P.O. Box 319-8100, San Jose, Costa Rica<br>Tel: 506 205-1800 Fax: 506 249-3500<br>Website: <a href="http://www.ecouncil.ac.cr">http://www.ecouncil.ac.cr</a><br>Email: <a href="mailto:eci@terra.ecouncil.ac.cr">eci@terra.ecouncil.ac.cr</a>                                                                                    |
| Environment Uaison Centre International (ELCI)                        | P.O. Box 72461, Nairobi, Kenya<br>Tel: 254-2-576114, 576154 Fax: 254-2-562175<br>Website: <a href="http://www.elci.org">http://www.elci.org</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@elci.org">info@elci.org</a>                                                                                                                          |
| Environnement et Développement Maghreb (ENDAMagheb)                   | 198, Quartier OUM, Rabat Souissi, Morocco<br>Tel: 212-37 756 414 / 756 415 Fax: (212-37) 756 413<br>Website: <a href="http://www.enda.org.ma/">http://www.enda.org.ma/</a><br>Email: <a href="mailto:coordination@enda.org.ma">coordination@enda.org.ma</a>                                                                      |
| Environnement et Développement du Tiers Monde (ENDATM)                | 4,85 rue Kleber BP 3370 Dakar, Senegal<br>Tel: 221 821 60 27 / 822 42 29 Fax: 221 822 26 95<br>Website: <a href="http://www.enda.sn/">http://www.enda.sn/</a> Email: <a href="mailto:enda@enda.sn">enda@enda.sn</a>                                                                                                              |
| FOCUS on the Global South (FOCUS)                                     | Room 212 Burgundy Place, Katipunan Ave. cor N. Gonzales Street, Loyola Heights, Quezon City 1108 Philippines<br>Tel: 632 4265610 Fax: 632 4330899<br>Website: <a href="http://www.focusweb.org/">http://www.focusweb.org/</a><br>Email: <a href="mailto:admin@focusweb.org">admin@focusweb.org</a>                               |
| Instituto de Estudios Ambientales (IDEA)                              | Camera 60 No. 27-70 Unidad Camilo Torres Bloque 7B Bogotá, Colombia<br>Tel: 3165085 / 3165113 / 3165000 Exts. 18556 / 18554, 18551 Fax: 3165205<br>Website: <a href="http://1168.176.37.84/idea.html">http://1168.176.37.84/idea.html</a><br>Email: <a href="mailto:idea@bacata.usc.unal.edu.co">idea@bacata.usc.unal.edu.co</a> |

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED-LA)     | Av. Gral. Paz 1180, 1428 Buenos Aires, Argentina<br>Tel: 54 11 4702 1495 Fax: 54 11 4701 2637<br>Email: <a href="mailto:iied-ac@sei.com.ar">iied-ac@sei.com.ar</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa (NESDA) | P.O. Box 95 Tichet Annex ADB, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire<br>Tel: 225 20 54 19 Fax: 225 20 59 22<br>Website: <a href="http://www.nesda.org/nesda/">http://www.nesda.org/nesda/</a><br>Email: <a href="mailto:nesda@africaonline.co.ci">nesda@africaonline.co.ci</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Nigeria Environmental Study Action Team (NEST)                        | 1 Olukun Street, Bodija UI, P.O. Box 22025, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria<br>Tel: 234 2 810 5167 Fax: 234 2 8102644<br>Email: <a href="mailto:nestnig@nest.org.ng">nestnig@nest.org.ng</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Stockholm Environment Institute – Boston Center (SEI-B)               | 11 Arlington Street, Boston, MA 02116-3411, USA<br>Tel: 617 266 8090 Fax: 617 266 8303<br>Website: <a href="http://info@sei.org">info@sei.org</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@sei.org">info@sei.org</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Stockholm Environment Institute – Tallin (SEI-Tallin)                 | Stockholm Environment Institute - Tallinn Center, Box 160, 10502, Tallinn Estonia<br>Tel: 372 6 314 200 Fax: 372 6 313 240<br>Website: <a href="http://www.sei.se/sei/tfront.html">http://www.sei.se/sei/tfront.html</a><br>Email: <a href="mailto:postmaster@sei.ee">postmaster@sei.ee</a>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Stockholm Environment Institute – Thailand (SEI-Thailand)             | Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia c/o UNEP RRC AP Outreach Building, Asian Institute of Technology, Km. 42, Phaholyothin Highway Pathumthani 12120, Thailand<br>Tel: 66 02 524 6495 Fax: 66 02 516 2125/524 6233<br>SDPI, No. 3, UN Boulevard, Diplomatic Enclave 1, G-5, Islamabad, Pakistan<br>Tel: 92 51 22 78 134 Fax: 92 51 22 78 135<br>Website: <a href="http://www.sdpi.org/">http://www.sdpi.org/</a> Email: <a href="mailto:main.sdpi.org">main.sdpi.org</a> |
| The Centre for Sustainable Development (CENESTA)                      | 5 Lakpour Lane, Suite 24, Langary Street, Nobonyad Square, IR-16936 Tehran, Iran<br>Tel/Fax: 98-21-295 42 17<br>Website: <a href="http://www.cenesta.org/">http://www.cenesta.org/</a><br>Email: <a href="mailto:cenesta@cenesta.org">cenesta@cenesta.org</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Uganda Wildlife Society (UWS)                                         | P.O. Box 7422, Kampala, Uganda<br>Website: <a href="http://www.uws.org">www.uws.org</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Zimbabwe Energy Research Organization (ZERO)                          | 158 Fife Avenue, P.O. Box 5338 Harare, Zimbabwe<br>Tel/Fax: 263 4 791333/732658/700030/730230/720405<br>Website: <a href="http://www.zero.org.zw/">http://www.zero.org.zw/</a><br>Email: <a href="mailto:zero@internet.co.zw">zero@internet.co.zw</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |



## **Annex 2 About This Research Initiative**

The current series finds its origins in the initiative “Envisioning Sustainable Development,” a collaborative effort led by the Stockholm Environment Institute – Boston Center (SEI-B) with close support from the United Nations Environment Programme. In early 2001, the initiative proposal was submitted for funding consideration to the UNEP NGOs/Civil Society Unit of the Division of Policy Development and Law. The proposed plan of action was to construct a narrative of the success stories of sustainable development through a series civil society consultation processes held at global, regional and sub-regional levels, and to draw from this narrative lessons on realizing sustainable development for both practitioners and policy makers. The proposal was approved, and funding was generously provided by the Norwegian and Belgian governments.

The study focused on six regions of the world – Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia and North Africa, and Eastern and Central Europe. Twenty highly regarded civil society organizations were selected as official partners. (The extensive partnership created for the study is outlined in Annex One.) Eleven of these partners were members of the Regional and International Networking Group (RING), a global alliance of research and policy organizations that collaborate on a program of research, dissemination and policy advocacy (see [www.ring-alliance.org](http://www.ring-alliance.org)). The initiative’s partners carried out the primary tasks, namely, to conduct regional consultations on civil society perspectives on sustainable development and, subsequently, to feed these consultations into national and sub-regional reports on sustainable development. In all, this was an exercise in assessing the progress and current status of sustainable development in the post-Rio years (UNCED, 1992). Moreover, it was an opportunity to envision what a sustainable world could look like in the future.

### **Rationale**

The initiative was motivated by the following needs:

- To undertake comprehensive regional reviews of the implementation of Agenda 21 and outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.
- The need for a comprehensive, grassroots civil society consultation to assess progress, failures, bottlenecks and impediments with regard to the implementation of Agenda 21.
- To develop regional civil society consensus and positions on the issues to be debated at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, on the practical implications of sustainable development for planning, policy and action in different regions.
- To bring together key research analysts, leading NGOs and major groups in the definition of sustainability goals.
- To map out further policy and action in order to prioritize actions across various domains and sectors, and make the vision of sustainable development relevant to the lives of ordinary people.

## Objectives

In responding to these needs, the initiative identified two main objectives:

- To create a forum for consultation and discussion of substantive issues and generate concrete products that can be used as tools for advocacy and outreach, and provide a solid basis for innovative and practical policies. The outcome of this process will feed into the governmental process.
- To build upon the GEO-3 scenario studies on the requirements for a transition to sustainable development by bringing in regional, institutional and sectoral details to supplement the aggregate scenario.

## Outputs

- *Sub-regional consultations on the visioning of sustainable development.* The goal of the sub-regional consultations was to subject the draft reports to scrutiny and review, flesh out the success stories, and probe the underlying visions of sustainable development. This process was crafted to assess the potential for convergence, integration, replication, and universalization of success stories, to assess the obstacles to be overcome in this process, and to assess the political support needed to bring them to scale. A second and related objective of the consultations was to elicit opinions on international environmental governance as well as the desired relationship between UNEP and civil society. The list of all organizations consulted with is in Annex Four. In all, these consultations involved over 350 individuals belonging to 300 civil society organizations from 70 countries in nine sub-regions (South America, Mesoamerica, South Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, East Africa, South East Asia, North Africa/West Asia, West Africa, and Southern Africa). From these, nine consultation reports were prepared. (See Annex Four for the abbreviated versions of these reports.) Finally, a Global Consultation, held in April 2002, provided partners with the opportunity to exchange views and insights on the notion of ‘civil will’ in their respective countries and regions.
- The partners prepared fifteen in-depth national reports and seven in-depth sub-regional/regional reports on integrated visions of sustainable development. The series, *Civic Entrepreneurship: A Civil Society Perspective on Sustainable Development*, comprises seven volumes. Volumes two to six are comprised of the national and regional reports. The current volume, *A Global Synthesis*, is the first in the series.
- *A civil society database and Website* has been developed for UNEP, through this initiative. The site hosts consultation background materials, general information, as well as a database on civil society organizations that can be easily updated. The Website and database will be hosted from the UNEP server.

## Role in the WSSD

The initiative culminated with the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in August 2002, in the release of the seven-volume series, and in a one-day workshop, featuring presentations from the partners, in addition to keynote speeches by representatives of UNEP and other renowned institutions.

## Annex 3 List of Consultation Participants (Organization Name: Participant's Name)

### SOUTH AMERICA

#### Argentina

- Asociación, Ambientalista VERDE X GRIS: Jorge A. Faggia
- Asociación Protección del Ambiente: Jose Velez
- Cambiar Centro Ambiental: Yolanda Ortiz
- FUCEMA: Martín Gastelu
- FINISTERRAE: Graciela Ramacciotti
- Fundación FINES: Osvaldo Russo
- Fundación Ecológica Universal: Liliana Hisas
- Fundación Educativa Woodville: Stephen Cohen
- Fundación Pro Tigre: Carlota Sánchez Aizcorbe
- FUNAM: Raúl Montenegro
- Grupo Ecológista Chaco: María Angelica Kees
- Movimiento Antinuclear del Chubut: Javier Rodríguez Pardo
- Asociación de Microemprendimientos productivos: Adolfo Lobos
- Fundación Ambiente, Cultura y Desarrollo: Rafael Kopta
- Fundación Patagonia Sustentable: Juan Moravek
- Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales: Daniel Ryan
- Comercio Justo y Consumo Responsable: Juan Silva
- Fundación Ambiente, Cultura y Desarrollo: Rafael Kopta
- Instituto para el Eco-desarrollo Regional Amazónico: AnaLucía Andrade
- ECOCLUBES: Martín Alessandretti

#### Chile

- CIPMA: Valerie Torres

#### Colombia

- INVEMAR: Maria Clemencia Bernal
- IMANI: German Ignacio Ochoa
- Academic: Luz Stella Velasquez
- IDEA: Lina Maria Hurtado

#### Ecuador

- Fundación Futuro Latinoamerica: Nicolas Lucas

#### Peru

- Unidad de Planificación y Desarrollo Estratégico: Molvina Zeballos Manzur

### MESO-AMERICA

#### Barbados

- The Future Centre Trust: Colin Hudson
- Caribbean Regional Environmental Programme, Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA): Cathal Healy-Singh

#### Costa Rica

- Red de Reservas Privadas/Earth: Carlos Luis Sandí
- UCR/CEESP-IUCN: Pascal Girot
- Universidad de Costa Rica: Jorge Cabrera Medaglia
- The Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress: Carlos Murillo
- Centro Internacional de Política Económica (CIMPE): Olman Segura
- Global Water Partnership (GWP) Comité Técnico para América Central (CATAC)\*: Maureen Ballesteros Vargas, Coordinadora Regional
- Organización de Estudios Tropicales (OTS): Javier Mateo
- Academic: Giovanni Solís
- Departamento de Desarrollo Campesino Forestal: Ing. Gilbert Canet Brenes
- Escuela Geografía/UCR: Geovanny Cordero

#### Cuba

- Fundación de la Naturaleza y el Hombre: Rosa Maria Cartaya
- Red Estudiantil Iberoamericana de Medio Ambiente: Yordanis Puerta
- Brigadas Técnicas Juveniles: Jose Manuel Guzman
- Centro Felix Varela: Maritza Moleon
- Centro de Ingeniería y Manejo Ambiental de Bahías y Costas (CIMAB): Manuel Alepuz

#### Dominican Republic

- Fondo Integrado pro Naturaleza: Arlette Pichardo

#### El Salvador

- Salvanatura: Juan Marco Alvarez,
- Fundación de Apoyo a los Municipios (FUNDAMANI): Guillermo Galván
- Normas y Políticas Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales: Lic. Sonia Ivett Sánchez
- Consejo Nacional para el Desarrollo Sostenible: Gloria Yanira Quiteño

### **Guatemala**

- Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES): Celia Marcos
- Global Water Partnership (GWP) Comité Técnico para América Central (CATAC): Elisa Colom de Morán
- FLACSO: Virgilio Reyes

### **Honduras**

- Asociación de Municipios para la Protección del Lago Yojoa, AMUPROLAGO: Tuliuccio Monterroso Bonilla

### **Jamaica**

- Negril Coral Reef Preservation Society (NCRPS): Katy Thacker
- St. Ann Environment Protection Association (STAEPA): Wendy Van Barneveld
- Independant consultant: David Smith

### **Mexico**

- Comisión Técnica de Asuntos Internacionales: Mateo Castillo Ceja
- RED Ambiental Juvenil: Alfredo Narváez Losano
- Red de Educadores Ambientales de Occidente de México, A.C.: Enriqueta Medellín

### **Panama**

- Fundación para el Desarrollo Integral de los Planes Ambientales Municipales (FEDISPAM): Celedonio Moncayo
- Universidad Autónoma de Chiriquí: Juan A. Bernal-Vega

### **Saint Lucia**

- Ministry of Planning, Development, Environment and Housing: Christopher Corbin

### **Trinidad and Tobago**

- Tropical Re-Leaf Foundation: Mary Schorse
- Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI): Sharon Laurent
- Water for the People: Lester Forde

## **SOUTH ASIA**

### **Bangladesh**

- Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies: Atiq Rahman
- Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee: Abdul-Muyeed Chowdhury
- Regional Sustainable Use Program, IUCN: Aban Marker Kabraji
- Striving Towards Environment Protection: Afifa Raihana
- Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad: Q.K. Ahmad

### **India**

- South Asia Rural Reconstruction Association: G.N. Reddi
- Development Alternatives: Ashok Khosla
- Venugram Paryavaran Sangh Belgaum Karnatak: Lalan Prabhu

### **Pakistan**

- Sustainable Development Policy Institute: Shahrukh Rafi Khan
- SUNGI Development Foundation: Shahid Zia
- IUCN Pakistan: Gul Najam Jamy
- NGO Resource Center: Qadeer Baig
- WWF Pakistan: Ali Hassan Habib

### **Sri Lanka**

- Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya: Cyril Ekanayake
- Mandate the Future – Worldview International Foundation: Kishitij Joshi
- Ruk Rakaganno – Women's Environmental Center: Kamini Meedeniya Vitarana
- Environment Foundation Ltd.: Namal Premawardena
- Energy Forum: Asoka Nalanda Abeygunawardana
- Center for Environment & Development: Uchita de Zoysa

## **CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

### **Albania**

- Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization: Silva Dracini

### **Bulgaria**

- Centre for Environmental Information & Education (CEIE): Petko Kovatchev
- Black Sea NGO Network, Regional Office: Aleksandar Shivarov
- Executive Environmental Agency: Nadya Boneva

### **Estonia**

- Tallinn Technical University: Raivo Vilu
- CCB, Estonian Green Movement: Valdur Lahtvee
- Association of Estonian Cities: Irja Alakivi

### **Hungary**

- National Society of Conservationists: Katalin Hargitai
- Ministry for Environment, Department for Sustainable: Zita Gellér
- Environmental Management and Law Association

(EMLA) /Access Initiative: Judy Amorosa

### **Latvia**

- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Reg. Dev: Janis Zaloksnis
- NGO Green Liberty: Janis Brizga
- Environmental Protection Club (VAK): Janis Ulme

### **Lithuania**

- ECAT Lithuania: Audrone Alijosiute
- Byfornylse Danmark, Lithuania: Paulius Kulikauskas

### **Macedonia**

- Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Macedonia: Margarita Matlievska

### **Romania**

- Terra Mileniul III: Andrei Lavinia
- Tirgu-Mures City Hall: Alina Aldea,
- University of Bucharest, EarthVoice Romania: Angheluta Vadineanu
- Department of Systems Ecology, University of Bucharest: Nicoleta Adriana Geamana
- International Law and Treaties Division, Min. of Foreign Affairs: Laura Stresina

### **Russia**

- Eco-Accord: Olga Ponizova
- International Discussion Club – Moscow: Andrey Ozharovskii
- NGO Green World: Oleg Bodrov
- Non-governmental Ecological Vernadsky Foundation: Andrey Andreevsky

## **EAST AFRICA**

### **Ethiopia**

- Forum for Environment Advocacy: Yonas Yohannes
- Institute of Sustainable Development: Million Belay
- Christian Relief and Development Association: Hailu Nega Zelelew

### **Kenya**

- Manor House Agricultural Centre: Dominic Sikuku
- Environmental Liaison Centre International: Barbara Gemmill
- Eco News Africa: Njogu Barua
- Worldwide Fund For Nature: Veronique Tshibalanga
- Cohort for Research on Environment, Urban Management and Human Settlement: Nicky Nzioki

- East African Wildlife Society: Peter Ochola
- Heinrich Böll Foundation Regional Office: Aseghedech Girmazion
- Afrika 21st Century: Patrick Muraguri
- Intermediate Technology Development Group: Isabella Masinde

### **Somalia**

- Horn of Africa Relief and Development: Fatima Jibrell

### **Tanzania**

- Lawyers' Environmental Action Team: Melchisedeck Lutema

### **Uganda**

- Uganda Wildlife Society: Moses Isooba
- Environmental Alert: Dorothy Kaggwa
- UNED Forum: Felix Dodds
- African Center for Empowerment, Gender and Advocacy: Litha Musymi Ogana

## **SOUTHEAST ASIA**

### **Cambodia**

- HEKS Cambodia Programme: Lot S. Miranda
- STAR Kampuchea: Nhek Sarin
- CNAC: Sil Vineth
- WALHI: Rini D. Nasution

### **China**

- CANGO: Haoming Huang
- ChinDHRRA: Alice Chou and Bosco Lee

### **Indonesia**

- WALHI (Friends of the Earth): Farah Sofa
- Federation of Indonesian Peasant Union: Irma Yanny
- Bioforum: Mr. Erizal
- LATIN (Lembaga Alam Tropika Indonesia): Dwi R. Muhtaman
- BINA SWADAYA: Em Haryadi
- BINA DESA/InDHRRA: Dwi Astuti
- Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation: Nur Amalia

### **Korea DPR**

- KoDHRRA: Sung Lee

### **Malaysia**

- PAN-AP: Sarojeni Rengam
- SEACON: Indrani Thuraisingham
- ERA: Consumers, Anuradha Chelliah
- MINSOC: Bishan Singh
- CI: Alice Escalante de Cruz
- Third World Network: Lim Li Lin
- PACOS: Jannie Lasimbang

### **Phillipines**

- Youth for Sustainable Development Assembly (YSDA): Loraine Gatlabayan
- SEARICE: Neth Dano
- CEFE Network Foundation: Jing Pacturan
- Prelature of Ipil: Bishop Antonio Ledesma
- ASIADHRRA: Marlene Ramirez
- PhilDHRRA: Cesar Belangel
- CART: Orlan Ravanera and Ben Cyrus Ellorin
- WWF Southeast Asia Policy Programme: Jose Padilla
- SEARSOLIN: Rachel Polestico
- LTK: Sis. Aida Velasquez
- ICDAI: Fr. Francis Lucas
- CARRD: Antonio B. Quizon
- UPLB: Angelina Briones
- PRRM: Isagani Serrano
- PAFID: Dave de Vera
- PDAP: Jose Noel Olano
- PAKISAMA: Rainier Almasan
- AFRIM: Alvin Reyes
- CODE: Dan Songco
- MASIPAG: Manny Yap
- IPAR: Janie Rose Villaroman

### **Thailand**

- Asia Partnership for Human Development: Dennis Uba
- Rural Reconstruction Alumni and Friends Association: Walaiporn Od
- Asian Resource Foundation: Abdus Sabur and Sultan Ahmed
- Focus on the Global South: Walden Bello
- Population and Community Development Association: Sirikant Panchasarp
- Magic Eyes Chao Phraya Barge Program: Daranee Wenuchan

### **Vietnam**

- RDSC: Dang Ngoc Quang
- WWF: Hoang Phurong Thao

## **WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA**

### **Algeria**

- Association Pour La Recherche Sur Le Climat Et L'Environnement: Idriss Hassani
- Mouvement Ecologique Algérien: Zohir Sekkal

### **Azerbaijan**

- Ecological Society: Islam Mustafev

### **Jordan**

- Friends of the Environment: Raouf Dabbas
- Jordan Royal Ecological Diving Society: Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi
- Petra National Trust: Aysar Akrawi

- Jordanian Society for Desertification Control and Badia Development: Abdellatif Arabiyat
- Arab Women's Organization of Jordan: Leila Hamarneh

### **Kazakhstan**

- Ecology of Biosphere: Sestager Aknazarov

### **Kuwait**

- Food Resources and Arid Lands Agriculture – Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research: Samira Omar

### **Lebanon**

- Green Line Association: Ali H. Darwish
- Environment Protection Committee: Amer Haddad
- Association for Forest Development and Conservation: Monir Bu Ghanem
- Friends of Horsch Ehden: Paul Khawaja

### **Iran**

- Center for Quality Sustainable Development: Fatemah Shaabani
- Sustainable Development Facilitators: Ziaeddin Almassi
- Boom Iran: Farrokh Mostofi
- Research and Sustainable Development Institute: Asghar Arjomandnia
- Mountain Environment Protection Society: Abdollah Ashtari
- Hamyaran Iran NGO Resource Center: Baquer Namazi
- Women Society Against Environmental Pollution: Mahlagha Mallah
- Association for Women and Sustainable Development: Shahla Farsi Monfared
- Association for Watershed Management of Iran: Seyd Ahmad Heydarian
- Centre for Sustainable Development: Catherine Khadija Razavi

### **Mauritania**

- Association de Développement et de Protection de l'Environnement: Mohamdi Ould el Hadj Brahim
- Terre Vivante: Issa Nabiyoullahi
- Oases.SOS: Mohamed Ould Souleymane:

### **Morocco**

- Association Bayti: Najat M'Jid:
- Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Energies Renouvelables et l'Environnement: Faouzi Senhaji

### **Palestine**

- The Palestinian Centre for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment: Shawqi Issa

- Land Research Centre: Jamal Talab:
- Galilee Society: The Arab National Society for Health Research and Services: Naim Daoud
- Palestinian Hydrology Group: Abd Alrahman Tamimi
- Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees: Shawkat Sarsour
- Palestine Wildlife Society: Imad Atrash

### **Tajakistan**

- Foundation to Support Civil Initiatives in Tajikistan: Muazama Burkhanova

### **Uzbekistan**

- Union for Defence of Aral Sea and Amudarya: Yusup Kamalov

### **Yemen**

- Yaman al Khadhra: Abdulrahman Eryani
- Yemen Conservation Program, BirdLife International: Omar Al-Saghier

## **SOUTHERN AFRICA**

### **South Africa**

- Group for Environmental Monitoring: Quentin Espey

### **Zimbabwe**

- ZERO: Dorothy Manuel
- Zimbabwe Women's Bureau: S. Zenda
- Intermediate Technology Development Group: E. Dengu
- Environment Africa: D. Mukarakate
- International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives: S. Chimbuya
- Farn Community Trust of Zimbabwe: A. Manyemba
- Global Village: N. Kazingizi
- Alliance for Justice and Peace in Southern Africa: G. Simango

## **WEST AFRICA**

### **Ghana**

- Kumasi Institute for Technology and Environment: Abeeko Brew-Hammond

### **Liberia**

- Pollution Central Association of Liberia: Henry O. Williams

### **Nigeria**

- Nigerian Environmental Study/Action Team: David Okali
- Nigerian Conservation Foundation: Aminu Kano

- Centre for Enterprise Development and Action Research: Olusade Taiwo
- Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Environment: Godwin Ojo
- Enterprise for Development International: Kayode Samuel
- University of Ibadan, Dept. of Library Archival and Information Studies: M.I. Atinmo

### **Senegal**

- ENDA Tiers Monde: Youba Sokona

## **Participants in Global Consultation with LEAD Fellows**

- Aditi Kapoor
- Ajay Narayanan
- Antonio Carlos Carneiro
- Arkadie Capcelea
- Bilal Syed
- Bimbola Bamidale
- Bruce Cameron Gilbert
- Cladio Alatorre
- Damian Ihedioha
- Dorcas Kayo
- Eka Budianta
- Erika Joubert
- Fabio de Andrade Abdala
- Fauzia Malik
- Fernando Monteiro da Cunha
- Gisela Alencar
- Gizele Yasmeen
- Godfrey Mvuma
- Huajun Tang
- Ismat Gul Khattak
- Joseph Hella
- Kota Vinayak Rao Vidyalkankar
- Li Lailai
- Li Liyan
- Linda Chisholm Nowlan
- Luiza Montez
- Marcia Regis
- Masse Lo
- Mehjabeen Abidi Habib
- Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan
- Muhammad Azam Roomi
- Muhammad Pervaz
- Shailendra Kumar Joshi
- Sheraz Manzoor Haider
- Sofia
- Sudha Nair
- Sujatha Byravan
- Vimal Garg
- Wei Zhao
- Woo Yen Pao
- Wynet Vera Smith
- Yedla Padmavathi
- Zoe Wildig

## **ANNEX 4   Abbreviated Consultation Reports**

### **East Africa Consultation Report**

**Author: Pamela Rhys-Hurn (Environment Liaison Centre International)**

#### **Definition of civil will in the sub-region**

Civil society includes business community, non-governmental organization (NGOs), private sector, communities and individuals: In this sub-region an abundance of civil will exists, as was explicitly shown in the concrete results within the realm of civil society. It is reflected in the following declaration made during the African NGO Forum:

*As civil society, we commit to:*

- Working with government as partners in sustainable development
- Strengthening civil society through networking and information sharing
- Forming partnerships with other role players in sustainable development
- Promoting professionalism throughout civil society
- Better co-ordinating civil society involvement and
- Promoting cross-pollination of diverse civil society organizations.

Within this context, civil society is looking for governments to provide an environment of accountability and responsiveness, which enables the civil society to participate in and facilitate people-centered sustainable development within the context of an ecosystem approach and ensures no disparity between responsibilities and resources allocation.

#### **Trends of civil will in the sub-region**

Most sustainable development success stories had come from outside government.

The vision of civil society versus the community's vision: Differences in vision arise between the views of civil society and those of the community, since NGOs sometimes address what the donor is funding and not necessarily what the community is interested in. This is a critical issue in sustainable development in view of the fact that without community ownership sustainability is not possible.

The main ingredients for success are:

- Increased potential income and creation of employment for the community
- Implementation of broad national development policies and international obligations
- Efficient resource utilization
- Capacity building of local groups to assess real technology transfer
- Improved public health and/or environmental quality
- Improvements in peoples' time usage.



In addition to other factors, successful initiatives have promoted appropriate and sustainable technologies, utilized local human skills, involved private companies or organizations and guaranteed long-term benefits for the communities involved.

### **Sub-regional policy recommendations**

The CSOs reviewed the draft ministerial documents for the African Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (November 18, 2001) and felt the need to add the following issues:

- Desertification – implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD)
- Trade (tariff and non-tariff barriers, benefits of globalization)
- Capacity building
- Preferential treatment in access to finances for developing countries
- Information – advocate for Principle 10 of Agenda 21
- Development Paradigm – measurement of African development should consider socio-economic issues not gross domestic product (GDP) as human development indicators
- HIV/AIDS remain on list of priorities and access to drugs.

Somalia's lack of a recognized government, both nationally and internationally has been a serious impediment on several fronts:

- There are no national policies on environmental protection. Where policies existed previously, attempts by some groups to enforce them are now trivialized as clan-based interference and rivalry.
- Absence of government with a strong policing force means that the natural resources are a free-for-all. Several foreign companies and individuals have ravaged with impunity the resources that the country had, as they knew they would not face legal action.

The international community is refusing to act, stating that they can only deal with legitimate governments in their efforts to address the problem, yet no tangible efforts are being made to work with Somalia civil society to help establish a recognizable government. In the meanwhile, civil society groups have come up to help address these issues, yet the will to support them is either very limited or totally lacking altogether.

Somalia is also unable to benefit from international treaties that would otherwise protect its fragile environment, since there is no recognized government to be party to the treaty.

Highlights of Somalia's issues due to its unique situation:

- Impact of war, e.g. collapse of state institutions and policing systems
- Inability to engage with international institutions and governments due to lack of formal system of governance as defined in international law
- Some areas still have peace with some form of governance; these systems should be

recognized and accepted

- Many Somalis left out due to problems
- Need to devise ways and means to involve Somalis without necessarily demanding a conventional government
- Need to create dialogue and identify mechanisms to involve Somalia.

### **Recommendations for enhancing UNEP's engagement with civil society**

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council decision 21/19 calls for a strategy to strengthen the relationship between UNEP and civil society.

Some issues touching on the above came out during Rob Sinclair's presentation of the issue paper titled, *Enhancing Civil Society Engagement in the Work of UNEP*.

- To begin a new relationship between civil society organizations (CSOs) and UNEP, there needs to be a clear definition of a CSO
- The relationship between CSOs and UNEP needs to be drafted formally
- The relationship should be open, encouraging functional participation of CSOs which includes greater involvement in implementation of its activities
- UNEP activities on CSO issues should be driven by "on the ground" needs, drawn from adequate consultation
- The process of Civil Society/UNEP engagement is not clearly understood among most CSOs
- Inclusion of CSOs by UNEP in the current process was lacking in translators, in text of documents being provided in French and in documents being provided in a timely manner, reducing the overall efficiency of the proceedings and apparent commitment.

### **Recommendations on UNEP's role in international environmental governance**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/21 calls for UNEP to assess its role in international environmental governance. The following are recommendations made by participants as to the direction required for international environmental governance that would best support their organizations.

- Considering that policy is a means to an end, it is desirable that UNEP endeavors to have policies which are explicit, especially in terms of targets and outcomes;
- There is an urgent need for UNEP to develop a unique focus for the Africa region, in order to deal effectively with the specific issues emanating from the region.

### **General conclusions**

The Eastern Africa consultations were structured in such a way as to take advantage of the Region of Africa Prepcom NGO Forum, which was scheduled to begin the following day.

Several main ideas and outputs were reached during the consultation:

- A distillation of types of successful initiatives in the sub-region was made. Success was achieved when initiatives promoted appropriate and sustainable technologies, utilized local human skills, involved private companies or organizations and guaranteed long-term benefits for the communities involved. Through these successes, sustainable development is being realized.
- Within the Eastern Africa sub-region, it is recognized that there still lacks an enabling environment in national policies as well as political will to fully achieve the expectations of the Rio summit. Other constraints of sustainable development include HIV/AIDS, corruption, trade and globalization, war and insecurity, incomplete scientific knowledge, lack of technical capacity.
- It was noted that success stories come from civil society rather than the government, thus it is envisioned that to achieve the expectations of the Rio Summit there must be a civil society-led process with collaboration between government and civil society.
- The lack of understanding and inclusiveness of NGOs within the UNEP process creates a disabling environment unable to move forward. To begin a new relationship between civil society organizations (CSOs) and UNEP, there needs to be a clear definition of a CSO and this relationship needs to be drafted formally and must be focused more ‘on the ground’
- Somalia presented special circumstances. Somalia stated that, though it does not have a recognized central government, it looks to the international community to provide an environment in which it can develop itself. Currently, sustainable development cannot move forward without funding for development initiatives. Somalia is looking for dialogue and measures to be included in the environmental treaties and other environmental governance systems.

## **Southern Africa Consultation Report**

Author: Emmanuel Moutondo (The Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa)

### **Definition of civil will in the sub-region**

NGOs in the Southern Africa sub-region are urged to identify a definition of civil will in terms of general principles likely to inspire policy development and implementation processes, and to improve on the implementation of sustainable development strategies. To that end, they have shown great conceptual energy in developing a common understanding of their interests and challenges.

The concept of civil will is understood differently depending on ideological viewpoints and socio-cultural contexts. To value civil will means to value the space they occupy in the regional, sub-regional and global scenes and even the civic virtues that make them dynamic. civil will is basically a voluntary expression of interests and aspirations of citizens that are organized and united by common interests, goals, values or traditions, and mobilized into

collective action either as beneficiaries or stakeholders of the sustainable development process.

Civil will is the voice of the civil society which is characterized by “educated self-interest” – an expression of collective ambition for participatory democracy and equity vis-à-vis access and utilization of resources of all kinds, environmental equity and the uplifting of environmental rights, capacity-building within the circles of the civil society, the effective implementation of the principle of subsidiarity, good governance and accountability within the civil society itself and by others – the empowerment, availability of and accessibility to environmental information, sustainability of initiatives and program activities. However, not every organization of the civil society in the sub-region necessarily plays a positive role in promoting the civil will. Some do not have a positive purpose or authenticity. In addition, the civil society realm is not necessarily a space of cohesion as competition and conflict of interests is sometimes in the picture.

The participants agreed that civil will exists in their sub-region and they recognized that the efforts of the civil society have been the primary drivers of sustainable development in their respective countries, particularly at the local level. civil will finds its manifestation in many programs and sectoral areas in the sub-region, such as:

- The establishment of networks and partnerships
- The formation of new community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- The contribution of the civil society in the formulation and implementation of sub-regional programs (e.g., SRAPON, CCD/SADC-EMLS)
- The implementation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-Small Grants Programme, Agenda 21, Local Agenda 21
- The civil society and industry’s partnerships in the promotion of cleaner production
- The research initiatives relating to the state of the environment, biotechnologies, indigenous knowledge systems, etc.
- The mainstreaming of participatory approaches at all levels of governance and development, (e.g., community-based natural resources management, district environmental action plans)
- The provision of technical assistance to governmental agencies and departments
- The profiling of local-level insights on issues to the attention of the government.

However, as most of the organizations of the civil society in the sub-region receive subsidies from foreign aid, it is felt that they are at risk of losing their autonomy of expression and self-reliance. It is felt that local people need to retain their values, both for their sake and for the sake of the continent as a whole. Constraints can be identified at the organizational level that impinge upon the right of people of the sub-region to have access to information, manage their resources efficiently, and participate fully as members of the civil society in the sustainable development debate. It is therefore important to create an enabling environment that allows all stakeholders, especially the poor in the rural areas, to be part of the changes needed in decision-making processes, in influencing and sharing control over development initiatives and decisions which affect them.

## **Trends of civil will in the sub-region**

According to the participants, the causal relationship between civil action and successful promotion of sustainable development is early involvement of the stakeholders at the local level in processes, programs and initiatives. Many actors are involved in addressing the environmental and social challenges in the sub-region. At the current level of sustainable development in the sub-region, members of the civil society community – particularly the non-governmental organizations and grassroots organizations – are one very important group. In contrast to governmental policies and programs, the strongest advantage of such independent organizations lies in their direct contact with the local people whom they serve.

The emergence of the NGO community is not recent in the sub-region and the scope of their activities is diversified in comparison to the individual countries' needs. The obvious question that emerged is: What are the forces that constrain the NGO community from achieving their ultimate goals? The participants found that the current interrelationships between the international NGOs and domestic NGOs threaten to create an unfair playing field among the latter and a possible loss of their identity, especially at the early stages of their institutional development. Innovative and constructive partnerships between different sectors and interests should provide significant progress toward creating sustainability. Partnerships may evolve from successful envisioning, inventory, or indicator initiatives, or they may form around specific issues and areas of concern. Despite a history of mutual distrust and sometimes animosity between stakeholders, there have been remarkable changes in recent years in the formulation of policies and programs supporting the greater engagement of rural people in the management of their resources.

## **Sub-regional policy recommendations**

There is a clear need to explore new and better ways to deal with the materialization of sustainable development in the sub-region, both in the context of problems identification and policy development and implementation. This also applies to the whole continent. There is a lot at stake as decentralization and sustainable development programmes in some countries of the sub-region are creating opportunities for local people to have a greater say in determining their own sustainable development agendas. It's clear that when governments or any public institutions fail, people suffer; particularly the poor and the marginalized.

The civil society organizations need to occupy the political spaces that are being created throughout the current reforms in some donors' policies. If they don't, then these may be co-opted, as usual, by the other interests and local elites, with a risk of further marginalization. For many years, the NGOs community has gained and is promoting this message mainly through various grassroots development programs targeting poverty alleviation and among other community-based natural resource management and conservation. In a few cases, some NGOs help local people articulate their views, or are themselves involved in activities advocating more environmentally and socially sound, long-term development strategies.

It is felt that the environmental NGOs advocating for sustainable development should target local governments because of their significant responsibility for the environmental character of investment decisions. They need to conduct further research on the interactions between international financial flows and the domestic environment and sustainable development policies.

## **Recommendations for enhancing UNEP's engagement with civil society**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/19 calls for a strategy to strengthen the relationship between UNEP and civil society.

Civil society organizations and particularly the non-governmental organizations have instrumental value with respect to UNEP's sustainable development activities and they should be viewed as full partners. Effective cooperation between UNEP and civil society organizations requires an understanding by the former of the NGOs sector. This means recognizing their diversity on the basis of the sub-region's specificity and interests, as well as its possibilities, opportunities and vulnerabilities. The civil society organizations are important to achieving UNEP's environmental governance goals. UNEP needs to promote an active and continuous dialogue with the civil society aimed at building partnership to solve key issues and problems related to sustainable development. This is based on the conviction that environmental protection measures can be more sustainable only when and if stakeholder groups in the civil society help to design, steer and participate in them. In that context, a number of recommendations were made towards UNEP in the following areas:

- Participatory democracy should be mandatory and enforceable within the UN system and member states
- The civil society should be allowed to voice their concerns and positions at international fora as equal partners to governments
- Capacity-building for the civil society should be part of the UN programs
- The civil society should be made accountable
- There is need for change in the global governance.

In this perspective, it is not enough to assess the strengths, needs and roles of NGOs as requested by the Governing Council of UNEP, but also encourage the community-based organizations in implementing sustainable resource management strategies. UNEP should foster a tripartite relationship between the permanent representatives of the members of its governing council, the civil society and non-governmental organizations and its own secretariat to help create an enabling political environment and support a responsive civil society with educated self-interest.

UNEP should strive to improve its budgetary allocations to permit NGOs' actions or activities, drawing on the expertise and local knowledge of the civil society, to reach the poor and solve environmental problems at the grassroots level.

## **Recommendations on UNEP's role in international environmental governance**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/21 calls for UNEP to assess its role in international environmental governance. The following are recommendations made by participants as to the direction required for international environmental governance that would best support their organizations.

There is need to directly influence policy development and implementation through civil will in working with a range of organizations from the North on the basis of educated self-interest. A related proposal is to increase awareness on sustainable development among

investment planners. Resources should be made available by the international community for the civil society to carry out their sustainable development activities. Information on opportunities for NGOs must be freely and readily available. Sub-regional bodies, such as the South African Development Community (SADC) should integrate into their strategies the promotion of full cooperation and partnerships with the civil society. One strategy thought of is to set up a sub-regional platform in order to shape an agenda for the materialization of their vision. The lesson learned is that experiences are best at the local level. More community-based organizations need to be trained to know how to defend the interests of the communities they represent.

## **West Africa Sub-regional Consultation Report**

Author: David Okali (Nigeria Environmental Study Action Team)

### **The definition of civil will**

‘Civil society’ was understood as ‘the people’ as against ‘the state.’ civil will was understood as the force exerted by civil society on events, expressed most commonly in the sub-region through actions by vanguards of civil society such as labor movements, market communities, student or workers’ unions, the youth, town unions, NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), etc. Participants agreed that civil will exists, but noted that the expression of mass civil will is rare in the sub-region. Since the enabling environment for development in the sub-region is largely state determined, participants do not feel that civil society efforts are the primary drivers of sustainable development.

### **Trends of civil will in the sub-region**

Initiatives showing movement towards sustainable development have most of the following characteristics:

- Based on community or group needs
- Owned and driven by the beneficiaries themselves
- Involve participatory stakeholder involvement
- Possess identifiable institutionalized structures and actions
- Improve livelihoods
- Have high demonstration or replicability values
- Conform to local norms and traditions
- Improve people’s capacity to act
- Supported by existing or induced policy

In addition, initiatives that are multi-sectoral, address many needs and are well-targeted – as in the Nigerian case studies – tend to succeed or persist. The one initiative threatened with failure in the cases reviewed was that involving government collaboration in terms of funding and management. Traditional government weaknesses – corruption, lack of transparency and a top-down approach to decision-making were the impediments.

The major link between action and successful promotion of sustainable development seemed to be self interest; sustainable development is approached where this interest is largely satisfied as in the Akassa or Guinea worm eradication examples from Nigeria.

### **Sub-regional policy recommendations**

Government policy support or environment was critical to the success of some of the cases studied. The activities described could be further promoted by policies or programs that:

- Ensure ready and steady funding for civil society activities
- Involve civil society groups in initiative envisioning and implementation
- Allow greater transparency in transactions
- Promote equity and justice
- Improve access to natural resources, especially land
- Create more space for civil society participation in decision-making.

### **Recommendations for enhancing UNEP's engagement with civil society**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/19 calls for a strategy to strengthen the relationship between UNEP and civil society.

To strengthen the relationship between UNEP and civil society, participants recommended the following: UNEP should:

- Open its planning process to direct civil society input
- Minimize the use/influence of stifling country focal points (usually government agencies), e.g., maintaining direct links with NGOs (Many Nigerian NGOs have not had direct access to UNEP because UNEP insists the government Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), now Federal Ministry of Environment, is its focal point for Nigeria and refers enquiries to that focal point)
- Create an NGO desk if not already in place
- Offer direct support for NGO activities at community level
- Assist NGOs in regional and national networks in information sharing.

## **West/Central Asia and North Africa sub-regional consultation report**

Author: Maryam Rahmanian (Centre for Sustainable Development)

### **Definition of civil will in the sub-region**

The concept of civil will has been changing. In the past, civil will used to manifest itself in movements against colonizers, the monarchy, etc. In Iran there was history of underground movements – especially armed political ones, which ended after the Islamic Revolution. civil will currently manifests itself (peacefully) mostly in civil society



organizations, particularly NGOs. The constant in the struggles past and present has been protest against the control, use and squandering of the nation's natural resources.

Among the participants, there was a general feeling that civil will was strong, but that there were many obstacles to the full expression of this will. Furthermore, the strength of civil society has fluctuated since the Earth Summit. For example, NGOs in Lebanon and Jordan said they were in a "low" period, that the mid/late 1990s were better times for them. The current economic down-turn and conservative international political forces, particularly since September 11, have served to dampen expressions of 'civil will.'

The strongest manifestation of civil will at present is the proliferation of NGOs. The mere existence and increasing numbers of NGOs and other organs of civil society – as well as the large number of members that some of them have – is a testimony to the civil will in the region. Many NGOs continue to work in a context that is hostile to and suspicious of civil society. Similarly, the very fact that a discourse exists in many countries in the region on the role of civil society in general and sustainable development in particular is a manifestation of civil will. In countries such as Palestine and Lebanon civil will manifested itself very strongly during times of war when NGOs/CSOs stepped in to fill in the absent place of government by offering essential health, education, and welfare services. In Iran, an NGO spearheaded national efforts to devise a national strategy for sustainable development.

NGOs have been gaining in strength and confidence as well as in numbers. More and more NGOs are represented in international fora and are better able to express their needs and demands.

In general, civil will has manifested itself in educational, awareness-raising initiatives, or isolated development initiatives, with relatively little participation in legislative and policy-making processes and lobbying.

The factors limiting the expression of civil will in the region include the following:

- Lack of trust of government and lack of democracy and civil liberties
- Government plays the central role in running the country
- Minimal unity among NGOs: they are all competing for limited funds; there is little coalition-building or a common vision
- Inadequate financial resources: many NGOs raise their funds from contribution of members so their funds are very limited
- Lack of sufficient capacity: most NGOs are voluntary, with no professional staff and limited capacity and exposure for conducting activities and fundraising.

### **Characteristics of civil will promoting sustainable development in the sub-region**

*Participation:* The common feature of success stories that came out most strongly was participation. But it was important that participation should not be used as a token gesture. True participation would involve all stakeholders in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of any initiative or policy. One NGO had developed four levels of describing participation: exposure (showing your plans to the community, just informing them), exploration (one partner decides to investigate the potential threats to their initiative

and try to accommodate these), participation (the main actor allows others to speak, but within a framework that he already has) and partnership (transparent process, balance of power, everyone plays a role). Unfortunately, most participatory initiatives in the region were limited to the first two levels of participation described above.

*Multi-sectoral:* Initiatives which involve many sectors, and therefore many different partners, were seen as having greater chances of success. Some participants pointed out that it would be impossible to ignore the government, since the government has the authority and resources to do many things that civil society cannot. In many countries NGOs are simply not allowed to work in the field without some sort of government involvement. So government support is often necessary, but it is also important that the government is not given too much control of the initiative thus stifling civil society activity. There were also successful cases cited of collaboration between NGOs with on-the-ground experience and good relationships with local communities and scientists and academics who have access to technical knowledge but are removed from communities. Finally, affiliation with international organizations can often work in favor of an initiative, helping to gain financial resources and government support.

*Community-level:* Activities tend to be much more successful at the local level since the sense of community is stronger and existing ties and traditional systems can be used as a foundation for building development initiatives. Furthermore, activities are more manageable at a micro level. An essential component of success in achieving sustainable development has been to reinforce the potential capacities of the local community.

*Unity:* Those segments of civil society that have managed to create a common vision and sense of unity among them, such as business associations, have been more successful in achieving their goals, especially in terms of lobbying the government. NGOs still need to build their capacity in this regard; there is a vision, but it is not a common one and the overall goals tend to be quite individualistic.

*Capacity:* Any successful initiative requires securing funding which means having the capacity to secure that funding. Most NGOs have limited capacity to hunt for international funds and they don't know about funding opportunities available. Successful initiatives also require well-trained and dedicated staff with expertise and a strong sense of ethics.

### **Sub-regional policy recommendations**

There is a move in many, though not all, of the countries in the region to decentralize the government and to create a larger role for civil society. Many NGOs have been able to take advantage of this, but they have found true change in the government to be a slow process.

Some countries have established National Committees for Sustainable Development since the Rio Earth Summit, but they tend to be non-participatory and ineffective, only kicking into action to write reports for international conferences.

Some participants reported that there tends to be more advanced thinking on environmental issues than other sectors because it is entirely donor-driven.

In some cases governments have attempted to implement pro-environment policies and

although the results are slow to materialize, they are still appreciated by the civil society sector. Civil society, however, is very critical of the lack of coordination and integration of policies between various government sectors: for example while progressive environmental policies are introduced on the one hand, the negative impact of economic reform policies – especially on the poor – serves to undo that good.

Policies that could build on the activities of civil society organizations would:

- Include a major orientation towards and concern for communities
- Provide public hearings on governmental initiatives
- Actively seek the collaboration of NGOs
- Include mechanisms for cooperation
- Provide capacity-building opportunities for NGOs
- Provide opportunities for networking among NGOs at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

### **Recommendations for enhancing UNEP's engagement with civil society**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/19 calls for a strategy to strengthen the relationship between UNEP and civil society.

Most participants had had no experiences with UNEP and many had not even heard of it. They commented that UNEP is represented by UNDP in most of their countries, but its presence is hardly perceptible. Those that had heard of UNEP stressed that it had to clarify its goals – particularly at the local level. One NGO representative, who was active on a regional UNEP panel/commission on women and the environment for many years, said that UNEP was so weak at the regional level that the NGOs preferred to work directly with Headquarters.

Recommendations for UNEP policy for working with civil society in the region included:

- Facilitate the process of setting up international environmental governance to discuss issues related to globalization, sustainable development, international conventions and financing development
- Set up regional units for exchange of information and experiences
- Support local/national initiatives (through cash and in kind assistance), possibly following the small grants model of GEF
- Provide input on civil society initiatives and pro-actively solicit initiatives
- Assist in building bridges between government and civil society
- Clarify UNEP's mandate
- Adapt UNEP procedures to take into account national specificities as well as the needs of civil society organizations and adapt their administrative procedures accordingly
- Develop a participatory approach as a policy to work with the civil society: in order to improve cooperation with civil society, the number of encounters with NGOs should be increased and their active participation in initiatives and activities should be encouraged

- Present UNEP activities in a clearer more transparent way, and disseminate information on the initiatives in which they are involved and/or finance, so as to encourage the participation of NGOs in the activities.

### **Recommendations on UNEP's role in international environmental governance**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/21 calls for UNEP to assess its role in international environmental governance. The following are recommendations made by participants as to the direction required for international environmental governance that would best support their organizations.

The debate on international environmental governance was largely unfamiliar to the participants; therefore this part of the debate was perhaps the weakest in all countries in the region. It was not clear to many participants what was meant by “international environmental governance” and who the other possible candidates for setting up and running “international environmental governance” were. Nevertheless, the following points did arise.

Some participants said that it was too premature to set up UNEP as the international environmental governance body, since it has neither the money nor the power to play this role. Organizations like IUCN and WWF are seen as being much more active than UNEP. Some said that there could be a secretariat at UNEP, but that it should have the power of more than one organization behind it.

Another popular suggestion was that there could be councils or organizations for each sector, much like the existing ones for water and oil. Although some objected that this would cause fragmentation of sustainable development, others maintained that consolidation would create a huge top-heavy institution and that if corruption were to creep in at the top, then all other layers would also become corrupt. The size of such an organization would also be detrimental to diversity and to bottom-up programming.

## **Central and Eastern Europe Consultation Report**

Author: Ahto Oja (Stockholm Environment Institute-Tallinn)

### **Trends of civil will in the sub-region**

The most common characteristics of civil society initiatives is that they were long-term in scope. So long as an activity was voluntary in nature-designing strategies and action plans (without any consequences to the national budget, investment programs, any other resource allocation obligation) – it was successful. Also, the so-called “soft consultancy” initiatives, e.g., promoting education, training, capacity-building, producing guidelines and handbooks, were successful. Also some local eco-farming or handicraft initiatives were successful. There were no conclusive comments on the direct causal relationship between civil action and successful promotion of sustainable development.

### **Recommendations for enhancing UNEP's engagement with civil society**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/19 calls for a strategy to strengthen the relationship between UNEP and civil society.

- To support a 10-year funding program for CSOs which would include sustainable development education and training at all levels
- To allocate resources for the site visits, where sustainable development has been successfully implemented at the national and regional level
- To provide hands-on training for NGO/CSO leaders and sustainable development promoters in fund-raising, lobby facility building, communication techniques, and public participation
- To establish an annual sustainable development award for CSOs in different regions
- To create a small no-hassle fund where layman-level people could apply for small sustainable development activity funding
- Compiling (and publishing) annual reports of CSO participation in local community-development planning activities.

### **Recommendations on UNEP's role in international environmental governance**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/21 calls for UNEP to assess its role in international environmental governance. The following are recommendations made by participants as to the direction required for international environmental governance that would best support their organizations.

The consultation participants recommend that UNEP:

- Take on a leading role in establishment of World Environment Organization, which will be a balancing power for the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- Formulate a responsibility scheme which ensures that UN Conventions, dealing with public goods (climate, biodiversity, forests, oceans, etc.), are binding to all member governments of the UN.
- Establish a global procedure in which all public procurement procedures in every country will take into consideration the sustainable development principles. This would ensure that the public sector, at the national, regional and global level would make sustainable development-friendly choices in selecting technology, consumer goods and raw materials.

## **South America Consultation Report**

**Author: Kimberly Vilar (Internatinal Institute of Environment and Development Latin America)**

### **Definición de la 'voluntad cívica' en el región**

La reacción inicial de la mayoría fue reconocer estas premisas y hasta “celebrar” la reivindicación de la sociedad civil. Una expresión contundente fue la de Javier Rodriguez

Pardo de MACHSEPA del sur de la Argentina que alienta la consulta al pronunciar que, “En principio la sociedad civil es contestataria. Se encolumnan tras ella buena parte de la población y de entidades intermedias que canalizan su descontento por arbitrarias decisiones impuestas o por ausencia de participación oficial que suele no cumplir la función de controlar, proteger y crear alternativas sostenibles.” Varias otras organizaciones han destacado sus acciones en las bases como movimientos poderosos de cambio.

Sin embargo, Gabriela del CEUR de Argentina desafió las premisas básicas del proyecto –sobre la existencia de procesos de DS en la región- al invitar al grupo a reflexionar sobre qué debíamos decir como latinoamericanos. De esta manera incentiva a no asimilar las nociones de sustentabilidad de otras latitudes, sino reforzar en el documento final la insustentabilidad que estamos viviendo tanto en la Argentina como en otros países de Sudamérica. Otros participantes – como por ejemplo Mauro Cesetti Roscini, Yolanda Ortiz y Daniel Ryan, también coincidieron en que estos eran conceptos clave en los que basar una lectura latinoamericana del desarrollo sostenible (DS).

Además se han planteado varias observaciones y limitaciones interesantes acerca de los esfuerzos de la sociedad civil en tanto impulsores primarios del DS en sus países respectivos y por lo tanto el alcance de la acción independiente de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil.

En primer lugar algunos participantes se han pronunciado sobre el carácter “rígido,” “poco práctico,” “abstracto” de la “voluntad civil” del documento base. En este punto, tanto la Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano y el Instituto para el Ecodesarrollo Regional Amazónico desde Quito como los colegas de la Fundación Woodville de Bariloche subrayan (a lo que también han aludido otros participantes) que las acciones provenientes de la voluntad civil no necesariamente son impulsadas por una visión global de sustentabilidad, sino que “tienden a ser individualistas y aisladas porque responden a una visión parcial y relacionada a urgencias y necesidades inmediatas.” Además, “el desarrollo sustentable forma parte del léxico, pero no está presente en las prácticas culturales cotidianas, de allí que ni el concepto ni la práctica sean obvias para la mayoría de la población.”

Varios concluyen a partir de esta premisa que no concuerdan absolutamente con la división entre las tres narrativas correspondientes al Estado, Mercado y Sociedad Civil. Los que se refieren a este punto, señalan o bien la interconexión entre las tres dimensiones (estatal, económica y cívica) -que justamente la sociedad civil sola no puede “fortalecer espacios democráticos donde actores ‘empoderados’ y legítimos puedan interactuar en condiciones de mayor libertad como forma de construir el DS”- o bien enfatizan el rol imprescindible del Estado. Gabriela Merlinski dice que la función del Estado es “necesaria” como herramienta política para cuidar el bien común ante las decisiones mercantilizadas sobre el uso de recursos esenciales. Daniel Ryan nos invita a rescatar la importancia de lo público desde el punto de vista de los derechos y obligaciones de la ciudadanía.

Por lo tanto, para varios participantes, la voluntad cívica resulta “insuficiente” dentro de las estructuras macro económicas y sociales actuales. Yolanda Ortiz califica al documento base de “muy optimista en el enfoque y propuesta,” ya que “no pueden las ONGs, en forma independiente llegar a una resignificación del ‘desarrollo sustentable’ con una nueva valorización del ser humano y una racionalidad productiva alternativa.” Varios participantes han aportado la misma preocupación por dicha insuficiencia, y su contraparte de

complejidad tanto de las racionalidades que subyacen el sistema social y económico predominante, como también de los procesos mismos que componen el actual contexto insustentable. Principalmente, se reconocen las fuentes de la presente insustentabilidad como los sistemas sociales económicos vigentes que favorecen el manejo insustentable de los recursos naturales y la creciente distribución inequitativa de los ingresos y refuerzan las causas estructurales de problemas del desarrollo local o nacional. En general se percibe una visión de la sociedad civil como pequeñas iniciativas que nadan contra la corriente de dichas grandes fuerzas macro.

La demanda más aguda fue el de Mauro Cesetti Roscini de la Fundación para el Desarrollo Humano Sustentable de la Patagonia al cuestionar este razonamiento aún más cerca de sus raíces, al poner en duda la composición misma de la “sociedad civil” de Banuri. Nos recuerda que existen importantes exclusiones ciudadanas que excluyen a grandes poblaciones aun de la acción de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil. Por este motivo se plantea que el concepto de sociedad civil toma a la “sociedad organizada” y deja afuera a los excluidos, a los que no tienen representantes ni están organizados, no hay garantías de incluirlos en el concepto y en las iniciativas de DS. Las estrategias de los sectores excluidos para sobrevivir seguramente también encierran “factores de éxito” como la solidaridad, la economía popular, etc. Y desde aquí debemos repensar “la voluntad civil.” Es más, muchas de esas formas (ej: cortes de ruta, delincuencia, religiosidad popular, clientelismo) son cuestionadas y reprimidas, pero no leídas como “manifestaciones de su voluntad civil.”

## **Tendencias en la voluntad cívica del región**

En las palabras de Luz Stella Velasquez de IDEA-UN Colombia, “consideramos, que si bien durante esta conferencia electrónica no encontraremos respuestas muy sistemáticas, sí tenemos la posibilidad de enunciar algunas reflexiones que orienten la definición de criterios comunes para motivar una posible *historia de éxito*. Y que finalmente incidan en la definición de políticas y en el destino de las inversiones.”

La noción del “criterio de éxito” no fue muy acogida por los participantes. El representante de Vitae Civilis de Brasil, Rubens Born, declaró claramente que no conviene rotular a los casos de éxitos o fracasos genéricamente, lo cual considera un ejercicio de simplificación o “reduccionista.” La efectividad de una experiencia depende de su contexto (subdesarrollado o industrializado, rural o urbano, región y costumbres) y también de la etapa en la que se encuentra. De la misma manera, las intervenciones revelaron que la efectividad varía de acuerdo al tipo de acciones y por lo tanto el tipo de organizaciones. En rigor, los participantes que compusieron el foro representaron distintos ámbitos de trabajo – correspondientes a distintas disciplinas y funciones – desde donde hacen su aporte al desarrollo sustentable: algunas exploran los fenómenos desde la investigación y la academia, otras realizan programas y/o construyen acciones para influir en la políticas públicas mientras que otras se desempeñan a través del activismo en reacción a denuncias específicas. Cada una hace y ha compartido distintos tipos de avances y logros, los cual corresponden a distintos criterios.

IDEA-UN sostiene que uno de los mayores problemas para poner en práctica programas y proyectos atendiendo la integralidad requerida por el DS, al incluir las dimensiones económica, social y ambiental, ha sido la puesta en común de racionalidades distintas y en

muchos casos divergentes: la racionalidad del Estado, las múltiples racionalidades de las organizaciones comunitarias, las de los académicos, las de las ONGs y las de los grupos políticos, etc y la de las Agencias de Cooperación Internacional. Las distintas *racionalidades* (roles u escenarios) ya habían aparecido como una premisa inicial del proyecto. Lo que se ha desprendido novedosamente de la conferencia, empero, ha sido que la racionalidad, discurso y criterios pueden variar sustancialmente *entre* las organizaciones de la sociedad civil.

El criterio de éxito más evidente con respecto a las organizaciones dedicadas al activismo es el detenimiento o reversión de los procesos o condiciones que están denunciando. Las organizaciones ecologistas de base constituyeron redes en permanente comunicación, desarrollan labores educativas, encuentros y foros que les permiten obtener un poder en franco aumento, impulsando “el criterio de que 300 ONG pequeñas son más valiosas que una sola grande.” El ejemplo de la Red Gondwana de la cordillera andino patagónica, la Renace, y Coaliciones que apuntan a determinadas campañas permiten reemplazar en escala, la ausencia de los organismos oficiales, generalmente poco transparentes y de dudosa honestidad.

Todos los tipos de organizaciones están de acuerdo con que la clave se encuentra en los puentes y compromisos entre distintos sectores de la sociedad, además de sostener redes entre organizaciones con funciones y “racionalidades” semejantes. Según las organizaciones colombianas y Fundación Patagonia Sustentable, el éxito en un plan estratégico para una localidad es la generación de “un nuevo sistema de relaciones público-privadas” para la toma de decisiones y la implementación de proyectos y políticas para el DS.” Ese éxito se percibe en los compromisos públicos y privados (aportes económicos, de tiempo, de ideas, de personas) abocados a proyectos compartidos y consensuados.

### **Sugerencias de política regional**

Esta pregunta obtuvo menos respuestas directas de lo que se hubiera esperado. Sin embargo las pocas que hubo fueron contundentes. Desde Ecuador, Ana Lucía nos informa que los Gobiernos Provinciales se encuentran formulando planes de desarrollo sustentable a nivel provincial con la participación de los representantes de la sociedad civil. Observa un “interés de los diferentes actores sociales por involucrarse en esta forma de planificar, pero para que esta se constituya en un ejercicio vivencial de la democracia y potenciador de cambio, no debe ser un simple canal de demandas, sino un espacio de debate y construcción de la economía, de la sociedad y de oxigenación política local, no debe ser una pizarra en la que se escriben los problemas de la comunidad y se negocian cuantitativamente supuestas prioridades, sino un proceso permanente en el que se operativicen conceptos, tales como: equidad socioeconómica; equidad de género y generacional, actual y futura; reconocimiento de la diversidad etnocultural, construcción de las identidades y derecho a vivir las diferencias; descentralización, gestión local, gobierno local, concertación, gobernabilidad, transparencia administrativa, anticorrupción; capacidad local de interlocución económica, social, ambiental y política, en los debates sobre desarrollo sostenible regional y nacional, entre otros.”

Otros comentarios más críticos también fueron propositivos. Denunciaron una “visión cortoplacista y conocimiento deficientes sobre el desarrollo sustentable. Por este motivo se sugiere la capacitación de los dirigentes políticos para poder efectuar diagnósticos útiles y generar proyectos relevantes. Este proceso podría poner énfasis en la sensibilización hacia la importancia de asumir las agendas locales elaboradas por la sociedad civil agenda, además de promover contenidos pedagógicos de la curricula de



formación docente basados en las enseñanzas de la educación ambiental.

### **Sugerencias directas al PNUMA**

Las sugerencias expresadas explícitamente por el grupo de conferencistas se puede dividir en dos tipos. El PNUMA podría mejorar su compromiso con las organizaciones de la sociedad civil y así apoyar la voluntad cívica en sus esfuerzos por promover un desarrollo sustentable.

#### ***Al Introducir acciones nuevas o complementarias:***

- Coordinar y brindar apoyo financiero a la creación de nuevas redes productivas
- Involucrarse en proyectos de investigación y creación de una red integrada de información y evaluación del estado de desarrollo en la subregión
- Hacer trabajo de difusión al promover las metodologías eficaces y prácticas ambientales, como las experiencias de cogestión asociadas en Colombia
- Influir en políticas públicas de gobiernos locales en defensa de proyectos locales
- Organizar instancias de representación regional
- Mejorar la educación ambiental a partir de los aprendizajes A.1. – A.5.

#### ***Mantener un enfoque centrado en prioridades des DS:***

- Apoyar los gobiernos locales y procesos de descentralización
- Enfocarse tanto en proyectos eficaces como problemáticos
- Dar prioridad a las problemáticas urbanas
- Volver a priorizar la investigación participativa en sus prácticas, para diseñar sus programas y basar sus acción en las realidad particulares de la población.

## **Mesoamerica Consultation Report**

Author: Julio Guzman (The Earth Council)

### **Trends of civil will in the sub-region**

The common characteristics of the civic sustainable development initiatives that were successful are linked to how well defined the objectives are and the degree of economic support behind the initiative. In other words, financial sustainability, leadership, image, publicity, and moral and ethical principles are necessary ingredients for success. Participants pointed to the importance of establishing a relationship with international and/or local organizations, as this increases the opportunity of executing successful initiatives.

Financial collaboration came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), European Union, and the governments of the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Great Britain. These governments were thought of as the governments which started the conservation process and initiated the trend toward a better standard of living for all.

Another characteristic of successful civic initiatives is coordinated action among the

stakeholders, which, in turn, contributes to a unified local vision. At the CSO level, the chief success factors are sufficient leadership to formulate a comprehensive strategy and the necessary communication channels with civil society to facilitate the construction of civil will in favor of sustainable development.

The more successful initiatives have brought about a change in mind-set: they have encouraged communities to think about sustainable development holistically and not only in environmental terms. These CSOs perceive sustainable development as an opportunity for human development, security, equal rights, equity, and in democratic governance.

Another source of success is to look for financial “self-sustainability,” which in several cases has come about through the use of revolving funds that is intrinsically linked to the planning and prediction of times of low funding.

### **Sub-regional and national policy recommendations**

National policies have limited contribution to ‘civil will,’ because they have not created sufficient ways for public participation at the local, national and, even less, sub-regional levels. Participants agreed that the key action in favor of strengthening civil will should be directed toward decentralization, local development, and real local-level civil participation. In the short and medium term, spaces for civil society participation should be created for local, national, sub-regional, and global public policy formulation. It should also go along with an educational process (internalization) about the importance of participation, in order to guarantee it.

Participants discuss that a pre-requisite to sub-regional sustainable development policy is to establish strategic alliances and networks directed toward the sub-regional, national, local and community level, where in reality sustainable development is effectively carried out. These alliances should be made among civil society organizations, governments, and other actors to guarantee an effective comprehensive action in the short, medium and long term.

Another dimension of action is at the national government level. The idea is to urge newly elected governments to continue to support the already in-operation plans, programs, and initiatives from other administrations, despite the political pressure to end them. It is important to consider the role of municipalities in the sustainable development process, which need funding to strengthen their environmental units, their social and/or sustainable development ones and, maybe most important, their community participation units.

At the individual CSO level, members of these organizations should review their current roles and confront them to their fundamentals, because some have only become fund-hunting organizations, which use the term sustainable development to accomplish their private objectives. Some have tried to get noticed by criticizing the government without objectivity and with the goal of remaining as the sole actors.

At the individual personal level it is urgent to train leaders, who too often have the will but lack the technical knowledge. It is fundamental to create ways to promote civil organization, as well as technical growth beyond academics.

The national councils for sustainable development (NCSD) have not taken the necessary attention from government in order to accomplish Agenda 21 and the RIO agreements, but

they serve as an important potential tool in this direction. They need to be taken seriously into account by governmental institutions as a way to direct development toward sustainability and a better standard of living for the population.

### **Recommendations for enhancing UNEP's engagement with civil society**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/19 calls for a strategy to strengthen the relationship between UNEP and civil society.

According to the consultation participants, UNEP could support civil society organizations through encouraging the following activities:

- Create revolving credit funds for NGOs with local, national, and regional perspectives
- Design ways to encourage stakeholders to share their views and participate in the formulation of local, national, and regional policies. Education and training are necessary, as well as more funds for local initiatives and monitoring. UNEP could offer grant funding for core support to eligible NGOs that are engaged in relevant activities and programs
- Avoid bureaucracy and from-desk decisions, which also implies more local participation in policy design, consensus on decisions, and real and concrete support
- Establish strategic alliances and networks directed to the community and local levels
- Take into account that there are people who cannot afford the costs involved in attending the UNEP training courses. Funding could be made available to NGOs to support stakeholder participation in a wide range of areas: training workshops, local meetings concerned with governance or policy development, coordinating or attending environmental planning meetings, reviewing and responding to environmental impact assessments (EIAs), and participating in consultations.
- Create a Sustainable Development Executive Committee in every country, with representation of the different stakeholders, to deal with UNEP.
- Use more readily understood language that is devoid of excess jargon.

### **Recommendations on UNEP's role in international environmental governance**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/21 calls for UNEP to assess its role in international environmental governance. The following are recommendations made by participants as to the direction required for international environmental governance that would best support their organizations:

- Approach poverty from a sustainable development context.
- Strengthen the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSd) in every country in order to orient in the accomplishment of Agenda 21 and the various agreements reached at the UNCED.
- Encourage the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol as a way to finance sustainable development in developing countries.
- Support local, concrete activities. Support people at the local level by reviewing

their roles and accepting their core beliefs. Support at the national level could be achieved by designing mechanisms to put into practice the international accords (signed by countries).

- Support long-term planning and concrete actions for a 4-year presidential period. Sustainable development is long term.
- Take into account the financial transactions of international financial institution's funds for public participation for decision-making.
- Include sustainable development principles in the trade agreements.
- Advance an agenda so that the environmental agreements, not only benefit the north, but the south as well.
- Promote the participation of governmental representatives at the local level. Furthermore, create a sub-regional forum for civil society, governments, lateral and multilateral organizations, and other instances, to share their perspectives to accomplish a concrete action toward sustainable development.

## South Asia Consultation Report

Author: Ali Qadir (Sustainable Development Policy Institute)

### Sub-regional policy recommendations

Among the initiatives that have successfully promoted sustainable development in the sub-region, participants did not identify any specific commonalities. Similarly, there was no discussion on which national or international policies helped the efforts. The main result is that civil will has been a key element in promoting sustainable development on the ground. However, in and of itself it is inadequate to bring about a society-wide transition to sustainable development.

One of the recurrent themes in the discussion was the dichotomy between North and South vis-à-vis sustainable development. Northern countries were generally perceived as “arrogant” and the primary drivers of policies that deter sustainable development across the world. At the same time, their discourse was identified as one that does not strengthen the position of poor nations in the world, although international equity is an important component of sustainable development. In practical terms, the more developed countries have not lived up to the promises of financial aid, freer trade or enhanced technical collaboration and technology transfer. These have all harmed the cause of sustainable development in the region. Furthermore, inter-governmental organizations – which are typically influenced by Northern countries – have not delivered. In policy terms, this means that such organizations (including the World Bank, IMF and WTO) cannot play any constructive role in improving global environmental governance: their track record has been too poor to expect much.

In this regard, it was felt that two types of policies could support civil society efforts to promote sustainable development: targeted policy interventions, backed by political will, for poverty alleviation and macro-economic growth; and a policy environment that enables all stakeholders at the national level to collaborate on the transition to sustainable development.

## **Recommendations for enhancing UNEP's engagement with civil society**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/19 calls for a strategy to strengthen the relationship between UNEP and civil society.

There was no specific discussion on the relationship of UNEP and civil society, as outlined in GC 21/19 or the draft strategy paper produced by UNEP. In general the participants had not had much interaction with UNEP regarding their practice of sustainable development on the ground. However, under-cutting the debate was an implied role for the inter-governmental to promote civic initiatives. In particular, there was reference to an advocacy campaign launched by one participating organization to (successfully) amend the draft Forestry Sector Master Plan of Sri Lanka prepared by an international financial institution. There was a feeling that an organization like UNEP could strengthen civil society initiatives to promote environmental considerations in such cases. However, the role of inter-governmental organizations was generally not encouraged in global governance, given the track record of the most powerful ones, such as WTO, World Bank and IMF.

## **Recommendations on UNEP's role in international environmental governance**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/21 calls for UNEP to assess its role in international environmental governance. The following are recommendations made by participants as to the direction required for international environmental governance that would best support their organizations.

International environmental governance was debated to a great extent. One of the central features of the discussion was the notion of inter-dependence, particularly of different sectors of society with each other if sustainable development was to be promoted. It was discussed that despite continuous efforts, civil society has not managed to transmit its vision and experiences of sustainable development to society at large. It was proposed that civil society has remained too focused internally, not reaching out to other stakeholders who are essential to sustainable development. Multi-stakeholder interactions, joint actions and decision-making, and collective accountability were identified as the key elements to cooperation among the civic, public and private sectors. This sort of cooperation demands institutional frameworks for environmental governance, at least in the country and the region.

A concrete suggestion in this regard was for civil society to facilitate and mobilize National Sustainable Development Councils. Such Councils are inherently diverse, drawing on NGOs and CBOs, professional associations, trade unions and social movements, media, political groups, business and government. The strength of such a body would be in keeping it out of the "control" of any one sector. Rather it would facilitate all actors to take the sustainable development agenda forward independently in their own realms and hold each other accountable. The Center for Environment & Development in Sri Lanka is facilitating the formation of such a Council for the country, and also expressed a desire to participate in the formation of a Regional Sustainable Development Council for S Asia. UNEP could conceivably help in facilitating this process at the country level.

## South East Asia Consultation Report

Author: Alqulina Galang (Asian NGO Coalition for Rural Development and Agrarian Reform)

### Trends of civil will in the sub-region

A good account of how civil society was prompted and enabled to take on its present role since the Earth Summit was posted by a number of participants. While states were compelled by the Rio Declaration to adopt policies and mechanisms that paved the way to the sustainable path of development, much of the vision, direction and significant efforts in sustainable development originated outside the formal structure of the government and its instrumentalities.

The decade following the Rio Summit in 1992 witnessed the boom in civil society efforts in sustainable development initiatives worldwide. Many of these initiatives, however, started prior to Rio, and were pursued by numerous communities, organizations and individuals who were not even able to take part in the Rio Summit or not even fully aware of the commitments that resulted from it. It is interesting to note that some of these efforts are not consciously formulated as sustainable development initiatives nor branded as such. It can be said that the crucial contribution of Rio lies in providing an enabling policy environment for civil society to engage in sustainable development initiatives and to explore new forms of partnership beyond their own milieu. This mandate is clear in the preamble of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development which sets the goal of establishing a new and equitable social partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among states, key sectors of societies and people.

There were two major factors cited in this trend of increasing role of civil society: The first is the political changes worldwide that happened prior to and after the Rio Summit. These changes played a crucial role in providing an enabling environment for multi-sectoral partnership in sustainable development. The fall of military dictatorships in many developing countries in the '80s and the crumble of rigid ideological divides in the '90s have contributed substantially to fostering new forms of partnership among the government, key sectors of society and the people. This trend gave birth to noteworthy efforts in multi-sectoral partnerships like the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) in the Philippines, which would not have been feasible under the Marcos dictatorship. The second factor is the notable weakening of the power of the states in the '90s. This ushered in a development era led by sectors outside of government. The increased power and control of giant transnational corporations over key resources and utilities have left the States loosening its grip on political and economic power. The rabid pressure exerted on developing countries by a few industrialized countries for the former to adopt rigid international trade rules such as the recent rounds of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT), later transformed into the World Trade Organization (WTO), has left states at the mercy of an international trade market ruled by transnational corporations accountable to no one. Compliance with international trade rules have even become a bottom-line issue in many negotiations on the environment and sustainable development. This trend was clearly evident in the negotiations on the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Biosafety Protocol, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the Kyoto Protocol.

The weakening power of States has brought forward the important role played by civil society. The '90s saw the phenomenal rise of organized actions by groups outside governments and business. Civil actions in sustainable development ranged from community-based development efforts to national-scale development programs. What sets the efforts after Rio prominently apart from the earlier ventures by civil society and organized groups into sustainable development is perhaps their active involvement in policy advocacy and the increasing models of partnership with government. Policy involvement of civil society happens from the local level, through participation in local development councils by many Philippine organizations, to the high-level involvement in international discussions of groups such as Third World Network. Such involvements are aimed at broad objectives ranging from initiative formulation and implementation, budget appropriations and monitoring, to mainstreaming of community models, instituting policy changes and formulation of programs and policies. In many cases, the combined approaches of civil society organizations in initiating sustainable development models at the community level and engaging the government in policy initiatives have inescapably broadened these interventions to cover the whole range of concerns in governance. Examples of these engagements at policy level abound in the Philippines, especially upon the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991 and the presidential issuance on the PCSD. The key role played by civil society organizations in the formulation of Philippine Agenda 21 is particularly notable.

Civil society involvement in policy discussions is not limited to participation in government bodies and critical collaborations, but includes outright challenge and critique of government's policies as well. Direct pressures are exerted on governments through such forms as demonstrations and direct actions aimed at raising issues that are often ignored in formal negotiations and official discussions. Civil society actions surrounding the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the various trade negotiations on the WTO, which culminated in the Battle in Seattle, are all directly related to civil will on sustainable development. The critique raised in these platforms, especially on the contradictions of the objectives in sustainable development, has led governments and multilateral institutions to slow down, re-think their approaches, study the impacts of trade agreements, and in some cases, strategize on how to win over the support of civil society. Beyond the pressures exerted by these actions on governments and formal institutions, these greatly contributed to increasing public and media awareness of sustainable development issues, which enhanced the enabling environment for these initiatives.

There is no denying the fact that civil society has become a major player in policy discussions at different levels, and no government, even the most repressive, can ignore this reality. The varying approaches in asserting civil will in sustainable development – from independent initiatives in community development to collaborative implementation of initiatives with government, from purely community involvement to participation in policy formulation, from the local level to the international arena – have made all this possible.

### **Sub-regional policy recommendations**

Five lessons can be deduced from the NGO experiences in implementing sustainable development programs and initiatives. These are valuable in forming or reviewing new and existing policies. Moreover, it is suggested that these lessons be considered in strengthening existing initiatives on sustainable development.

Sustainable development is rooted in peoples' struggle for survival and self-determination

Development framework should be people-centered both in terms of approaches and desired outcome. It cannot be separated from humanity and their survival; that being the ultimate measure of sustainability, whether measured in the short or long term. Development interventions must be based on the demands of the people to survive and sustain themselves. Development effort, therefore, should be location-specific, i.e. respectful of context and time.

Capacity-building is needed for effective response to development challenges and successful adaptation to necessary changes

Development challenges are inevitable. However, neither an outright resistance nor full acceptance will be appropriate. It is important that people have the capacity to learn to respond or adapt to changes. The role of development actors like NGOs and government is critical to ensure that the process will be carefully managed and not alienate the people from their innate capacities. It should be remembered that the object of capacity-building does not start with zero capacity. Instead, the process should enhance a sense of identity and ownership.

The significant role and contribution of different sectors to sustainable development should be recognized through multi-stakeholder processes

While it is strongly recognized that communities are the prime actors in sustainable development, the significant role and contribution of other sectors is also vital. Thus, sustainable development requires a process and mechanism where all stakeholders can be engaged in meaningful exchange and share common experiences that will bring a higher level of understanding, unity and support towards the common goal of sustainable development. It is important to realize that no single sector can offer a complete solution to the multi-dimensional challenges of sustainable development. It is therefore strongly suggested to consider multi-stakeholder processes and engagements as another alternative.

Aggressive civil will has to be supported by sincere political will

Civil society notably played a significant role in advancing the goals of the Earth Summit, in terms of promoting sustainable practices or opposing those that pose threats. Yet, the government still remains as the largest development machinery, though the present trends also point to the increasing influence of corporations. Unless, the government exercises a strong political will towards achieving sustainable development, it will be more difficult for civil society to sustain its efforts in the coming years. Moreover, unnecessary pressures and displacements in pursuit of unsustainable growth will continue to confront the communities. Therefore, strong political will should be manifested through people-centered governance, sincere and sustained engagements with the civil society enhancing successful sustainable development programs and initiatives, and a sense of national sovereignty.

There must be a clear and acceptable mechanism to define accountability and transparency in the efforts of major development actors

Since the sustainable development process entails the partnership of various sectors, especially the government and civil society, transparency and accountability are important.



This is a big challenge especially for the civil society organizations considering the nature of its operation. The government, on the other hand, most often fails to comply with this public demand. A lot of cases proved that lack of transparency and undefined accountability jeopardizes even the well-planned development initiative. In the absence of any established mechanism, community participation and multi-stakeholder processes will help ensure accountability and transparency.

### **Recommendations for enhancing UNEP's engagement with civil society**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/19 calls for a strategy to strengthen the relationship between UNEP and civil society.

Civil society in the South, which basically includes NGOs, community organizations, women's groups, indigenous peoples' organizations, youth and research institutions, needs assistance in effectively engaging with UNEP. Experience shows that with appropriate capacity building, strong alliances can be forged at the national, regional and international level to intensify knowledge, strengthen research and policy formulation in promoting the perspectives and positions of the South. A stronger civil society in the South actively networking with like-minded northern counterparts would strengthen efforts to achieve sustainable development. The basic recommendations for engaging civil society identified by the participants were the following:

- Ensure proper representation and productive exchange with civil society especially the competent grassroots-oriented organizations
- Identify key civil society constituency either through an independent accreditation process or through reliance on established pre-UNCED and post-UNCED procedures and practices and provide transparent and clear guidelines to ensure constituency and true representation
- Build upon the experiences of other organizations in an effort to fine tune its strategy for engaging civil society
- Improve capacity and opportunity to adequately research and monitor local development
- Review its own policies on information dissemination to civil society to ensure access to information of the right groups at the right time
- Assess and guard any organization from dominating or attempting to dominate the process of engaging civil society and defining the role of UNEP in global environmental matters.

### **Recommendations on UNEP's role in international environmental governance**

UNEP Governing Council decision 21/21 calls for UNEP to assess its role in international environmental governance. The following are recommendations made by participants as to the direction required for international environmental governance that would best support their organizations. The participants offered the following comments:

- UNEP should have a well-defined relationship with the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) particularly in relating and dealing with the complicated issues

on trade and environment, as per the deliberation of the Governing Council. Having an appropriate forum (CSD and UNEP) will contribute to the resolution of many critical sustainable development issues. UNEP needs to be clear in the way it relates with the civil society and industry in carrying out such role

- UNEP, together with other strengthened components of the international environmental governance system, should provide an overall balance in the overall global governance system, to ensure that multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and their national implementation are not undermined in favor of WTO rules
- For UNEP to play an effective and appropriate role, the Secretariat and representatives of the member states in the Governing Council should have increased capacity to assess WTO principles and rules in relation to economic and social dimensions of development and thus be able to effectively advocate for sustainable development
- UNEP, as part of a strengthened international environmental governance should effectively interact with the IMF, World Bank and regional financial institutions to mainstream and operationalize sustainable development goals.

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